

A FRENCHMAN IN JAPAN

TRAVELS

BY
MAURICE DEKOBRA

TRANSLATED FROM
SAMOURAÏ 8 CYLINDRES
BY METCALFE WOOD

ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE

THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

To some people travel is a necessity. To others it is a calamity. One person looks upon it as a bad habit. Another considers it an art.

This same art was in existence in the days of Artaxerxes and the Retreat of the Ten Thousand. At that time the sandals of 10,000 tourists armed with bows and arrows, trod the dust of Asia Minor. To-day American liners, in spite of the crisis, carry thousands of Yankees armed with kodaks to the shores of the Mediterranean.

In Merovingian days they sang the gentle ballad of the ox waggon. In 1936 this ballad has become the feverish rhapsody of the locomotive. Don't ask me whether it is better to take eight days to go from Paris to Tours or to do the journey from Paris to Nice in sixteen hours. Those who bewail the time lost in travelling are ungrateful to Time, that

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wonderful remedy for all the ills of mankind, including Love.

The rhapsody of the locomotive to-day attracts millions of people who travel, not to keep eternal youth, but to change their occupations and their surroundings; just as one changes the fish's water in the aquarium.

The great attraction of travel lies in the unexpected. And we all love the unexpected. For there is happiness in being able to talk of—To-morrow. But there is sadness in saying the mournful word—Yesterday.

Having travelled a little during my literary career I have noted a few maxims which I beg to offer:

Attach the key of your trunk to your trousers, for there are two things in this world which are very easily lost—trunk-keys and good habits.

If you are travelling alone you can take a return ticket. If you are travelling with a lady, only take a single—one never knows.

Comets are the Pullman cars of the Milky Way.

It is said that the French do not care for travelling. In olden days perhaps. . . .

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To-day they have made great progress in this art and can give points to the Wandering Jew. It is true one cannot travel round the world on sixpence, but at any rate one can play poker on board the liners.

.

When one is travelling in Germany, by looking at the hoardings, the menus and the notices in the shops one can learn French . . . as it is spoken beyond the Rhine. A *cabinet particulier* is called a *chambre séparée*. A *garçonnière* is a *garçon-logis*. The *garde-robe* is the *vestiaire*. And a *restauration* means a *restaurant*. A *soubrette* is not a *femme-de-chambre* but a music hall lady singer. As to the *Hochparterre*, that is the *entresol*. And if you are served with a *kaffee-mélange* with a *balleuse* you learn that it means a *café-au-lait* with a *danseuse*. The great thing is to be able to understand it.

.

Learn to understand the Railway Time Tables. If the reading of the French Railway Time Tables is rather complicated and requires

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a knowledge of Algebra, the Unitary Method and Cryptography, the art of deciphering foreign Time Tables is still more baffling.

The English A.B.C., the German Fahrplan, the Italian Ferrovieri, the Spanish Coches Camas would have delighted the great Champollion, the expert in hieroglyphics.

Those, however, are nothing. Our poor little European Time Tables are mere child's play compared with the Railway Guides in the United States. On the Other Side the unfortunate traveller has not to contend with one or two great companies as in Europe. If one travels from, say, Boston to the Mexican border, one has to cope with six different companies. It would be much easier to find a needle in a bottle of hay. The Americans themselves give it up. The proof of that is, that at the New York stations there are experts in Railway Time Tables who trace you trains with a steady wet finger through a labyrinth of tables in a Time Table as big as an Encyclopaedia!

They are champions at logarithms and as a rule do not live to a very great age.

.

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Don't trust chance acquaintances on a journey. Aboard the liners, however great your love of cards may be, never play bridge with strangers. The man who pretends to be dead is often much more alive than one may think. "Footie" under the table was not invented for dog fish.

An American, who knew the ropes, one day pointed out to me, on board a boat which ran between New Orleans and Havana, a party of bridge players and whispered:

"Watch that tall fair man's ear. . . ."

I looked at it closely and I noticed that it moved slightly. Then the American said under his breath:

"He has just signalled 'four trumps' to his partner."

.

Another important point:

Should one take a camera?

It is a source of retrospective delight and disagreeable happenings.

At Luxor one day in the Valley of the Kings a charming little English girl came up to me and handing me her kodak said:

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" Oh! sir. . . . Would you be so good as to snap me in front of the tomb of Tut-Ank-Ammon? "

" With pleasure, mademoiselle."

I took one, two, three snaps. . . . I saw her again at the tomb of Rameses. Again she lent me her camera. We exchanged names and addresses. I saw her at Cairo. I met her later in Paris. She came running up to me and exclaimed:

" Oh, monsieur. . . . How can I thank you for having snapped me in Egypt! "

" Mademoiselle, there is no need to thank. . . . "

" Yes, yes there is. . . . When I got back to London I had my films developed and showed them to Harry, my fiancé. He frowned and remarked icily:

" 'What is that man's shadow I see on the edge of the photo? . . . One of your flirts, Kathleen? ' "

" We had a violent argument. I protested. He flew into a rage. I saw by that, that he was intolerably jealous."

" And so, mademoiselle? "

" Why, owing to you, I broke off my engage-

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ment with the imbecile. And I want to thank you for saving me from making such a deplorable match."

Ladies, take care what you snap. . . .
There is the eye of Moscow. . . . But there
is also the eye of the kodak. . . .

.

Some people find modern life flat and unprofitable. What a mistake! Never has the world been so exciting and so propitious for adventures. To say that the wireless, the gramophone and the sleeping car have killed romance shows that you do not understand the Jazz Age.

Romance stalks through the streets, the palaces and the telephone boxes. He no longer wears a mask and carries a sword as in the day when Jacques Casanova de Seingalt caused perturbation in the convents of Murano.

In 1936 romance is no longer so obvious. It hides itself in the heart and soul of the modern eight cylinder man without the safety valve of altruism.

Ask the rum-runner, the Alaska prospector, the Wall Street financier, the white slave

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trafficker of Monte Video, if their existence is less romantic than that of Cartouche or Jack the Ripper? In our day life is only insipid to minds built in mass production like Ford cars.

As one travels one comes across wild men, that is to say free men. Just as in the chemist's mortar, one sees the reactions of certain bodies one upon the other. So one sees the dazzling effect that a Yankee millionaire has upon a Levantine *demi-vierge* or the precipitate left on an English girl by an Argentine adventurer. What made Christopher Columbus a great man was, not that he discovered America, but that he set out to find it.

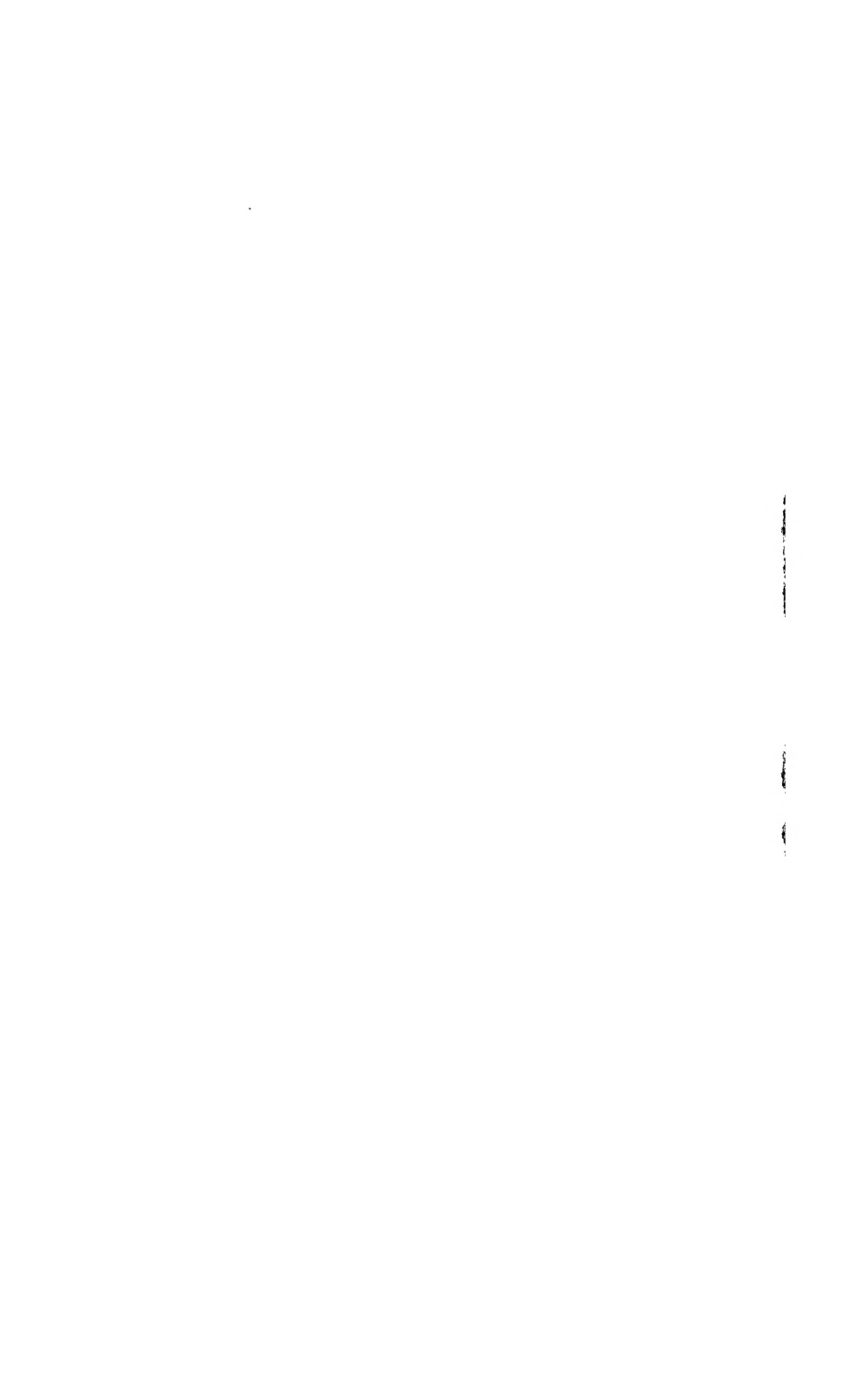
The pleasure of travel lies not merely in discovering the characteristics of humanity. According to Marcel Proust, to make up lost time owing to a rusty watch you need a magnifying glass and a pair of seven-leagued boots to race across the sidereal ether. There is also the search for the unexpected, that paprika of life.

A friend confessed to me one day:

"It is a strange thing. I never come across adventures in big hotels."



THEATRE STREET IN ASKUSA, THE GAYEST QUARTER OF TOKIO



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Poor fish! He would never find a herring in the North Sea. He would never recognise the "swallows" who frequent the large hotels; those *grandes dames* eaten up with boredom or those greedy adventuresses who are out in search of Grail—the Grail of cheques. They pass one by with a provoking or a haughty glance. They are ready, according to the time of day, the state of the weather, the influence of the last novel they have read, or the value of the dollar, to be kissed or cuffed.

As they pass one gets a whiff of their perfume. And one wonders what destiny has in store for them? A palace or a strait jacket? The warm embrace of a Don Juan . . . or the chloroform of an International crook?

.

Several unsophisticated travellers have asked me if the Madonna of the Sleeping Car type, that one comes across in European expresses, is especially Slav?

It is very difficult to answer a question like that, for the very good reason that the Slav mind is as difficult to understand in a railway

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carriage as it is in a shooting box far away in the Carpathians.

There are excellent studies of the Slav mind in the poems of Pouchkin, in the plays of Andriev or in the essays of Avertschenko or Boukhof. As a matter of fact we Latins know very little of the mentality of the Muscovites, whether it has in it more of the angel, the demon, the dreamer, the sadist, the fatalist or the ruthless. Who really knows the Slav mind? When you meet a charming Russian emigrant, with her steely blue eyes, her eyelids a little oblique, her smile a little cruel and her pearls a little false, do you know what is in her mind? Slavs have two characteristics—mysticism and *Nitchevo*; though mysticism is not a speciality found only between the Ural and the Dnieper.

During my travels I have met Gretchens in Hanover, Bretons at Saint Brieuc, and Californians in Los Angeles who were truly mystic. But the trade mark of the Russian brand of mysticism is written *Nitchevo* and is pronounced *S'kouchna*.

Don't ask me to analyse this *Nitchevo*. It is the brother-in-law of the Arab *Malesch*, of

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the Mussulman *Mektoub*, of the Levantine *Kismet*, and the cousin of "Why worry" so prevalent among Parisians in the 18th *arrondissement*.

One evening I was chatting with the conductor of a sleeping-car, who had been all over Europe, and to whom the art of travelling had no secrets. He was discussing the surroundings that were most suitable to the hatching of love episodes:

"Is it easier to say 'I love you' in a rocking chair on a French liner or '*Ia tibia khatchou*' in a Caucasian cellar on 57th Street, New York . . .? Must one give a little stab with a knife on the superb bare shoulder of a Swedish lady to get her to say definitely 'yes' or is it essential to read Baudelaire with one's head down and feet up to hasten the fall of a little Netherland lady full of romantic ideas?"

Whereupon I replied to the sympathetic conductor, as we were just emerging from a long tunnel:

"Let me suggest a comparison: There was once a king of a small country in Central Europe who, in referring to his subjects, made the following remark: 'Dress them in

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green, blue or yellow, they always run at the sight of the enemy.' One can say equally well in speaking of the cosmopolitan ladies of amorous tendencies: Dress them as Danes, Spaniards, Irish or Japanese, they will always be amenable to masculine guile. For, to love well in any language or in any latitude, one must know how to lie cleverly."

One morning, I noticed a handsome woman lying half naked like a dab on the sands at Lido, reading one of Oscar Wilde's books. Asking her if she was an admirer of the immortal author of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, she replied, as she blew sand through a straw:

"I adore Oscar Wilde because he glorifies lying. To him lying is a gentle art."

At any rate a lie that one tells at nine o'clock is sometimes the truth at midday.

The same bather quoted one of Alphonse Allais's remarks to Courteline:

"You have seen in a pork butcher's shop windows those strings of little sausages hanging between two smoked hams? Well, love, in Eros's Department Store, is like strings of lies hanging between two brassières!"

.

THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

The joys of travel. . . . They vary according to temperament, character and taste; according to whether you are nervous, arthritic or full-blooded.

I was told, one day, of a wonderful voyage taken by a peaceful citizen of Havre across the ocean; I have never forgotten it.

He was called Monsieur Demystel. He owned, in our famous Normandy port, a small hosiery business. At the age of fifty he retired, not rich, but with adequate means for his modest requirements. He had neither wife nor natural son. He did not even look after a lady from the music halls. He had only one passion—travel. But as he had yearnings for long voyages round the world, and it was quite impossible to satisfy them, he contented himself with reading stories by great explorers.

This good man, clever at selling silk socks and stockings with reinforced heels, knew the course of the Zambesi as well as H. M. Stanley; and the mysteries of the Dark Continent as well as Livingstone. He did not imagine that Burmah was a skin-disease, nor the Yang Tse Kiang a brand of tea. No one in Havre, not even the captains of coasting

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vessels, had such an extensive knowledge of geography.

When Monsieur Demystel retired and his leisure permitted him he happened to go to a little bar near the Quai de l'Eure—a little bar frequented by the sailors of the Compagnie Transatlantique. He was so interested in the conversation of these habitués that he went there again and again. He became acquainted with the proprietor, and every day, at six o'clock, he could be seen taking his glasses of Calvados at the navigator's table. He became friendly with the sailors. Gifts of tobacco and rounds of drinks had made him popular with these sea-faring characters, who would say between two quids of baccy:

“That old landlubber isn't a bad sort!”

He had become particularly friendly with a Monsieur Alfred, the barman on the *Dordogne*, and every time Monsieur Alfred came ashore the hosier was the first to listen to the account of his crossing. One day Monsieur Alfred said to Monsieur Demystel:

“Honestly, have you never been on board a liner? To hear you talk one would think you had sailed every sea in the world.”

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"Alas no," moaned Monsieur Demystel. "My furthest trip has been from Havre to Honfleur."

"You ought to give yourself a treat and have a look at America."

"Do you think I possess fifteen thousand francs to spend like that?"

Monsieur Alfred looked at Monsieur Demystel and after a moment's silence whispered:

"What would you say to going to New York on the nod?"

"Ah, my dear friend, if only I could!"

And Monsieur Demystel's eyes shone as though he was gazing at a feast in a palace.

"Listen," replied the barman, "the *Dordogne* sails next Saturday at two o'clock. Be, at ten o'clock, on the Quai de la Transat. When they are loading the last cases of whisky, I will smuggle you aboard and hide you in my store-room. Once out at sea all will be well. You will land at New York, spend ten days there and come back in the same way without it costing you a penny. Or at least you need only give me a couple of hundred francs tip and you will have the time of your life."

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The deal was made. Thrilled at the thought of spending a week at sea, Monsieur Demystel slept badly till the day of the departure. Nervous and excited, his little bundle under his arm, he arrived at the quay and waited for the signal from Monsieur Alfred and, with his heart beating fast, he slunk into the enormous liner.

The barman opened the door of the store-room, a dark little place smelling of corks, wax and stale liquor, and explained to him:

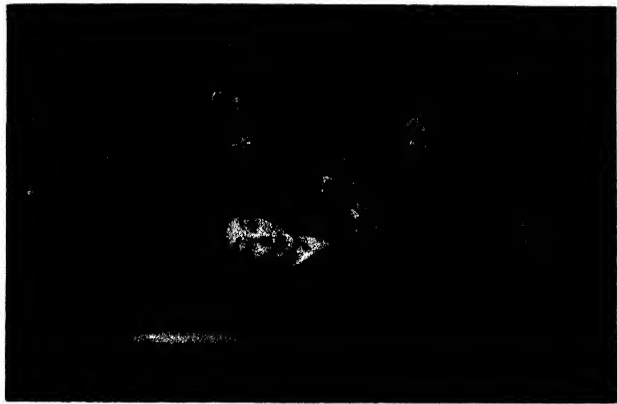
“ Now, have patience. And until we are at sea don't show your nose outside. If you do the ship's purser will put you in irons as a stowaway and I shall get the sack.”

Hours passed. Monsieur Demystel sitting on a case of port wine, could hear the noises of the liner getting under weigh—the grating of the cranes, the puffing of the donkey engines, the hoots of the siren. Then came the “ all-ashore ” bell. . . . The taking in of the gangways. . . . The first throbs of the engines. . . . The *Dordogne* was on its way to the New World.

At nine o'clock in the evening Monsieur Demystel, aching from head to foot, heard



THE DOLL'S FESTIVAL
SO POPULAR WITH THE CHILDREN
IN JAPAN



FLOWER DECORATION IS A
FINE ART WITH THE JAPANESE
LADIES

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Monsieur Alfred open the door. He looked forward with delight to a long promenade on deck. And also, he was feeling hungry.

“ I’m afraid, old boy, there’s no chance of your getting out,” said the barman in a low voice. “ The purser is going on his second rounds. Here’s a bit of Cheshire cheese, some bread and a bottle of beer. Make yourself as comfortable as you can for the night in your blanket.”

Monsieur Demystel, a little down-hearted, ate his bread and cheese and drank his beer. He slept very badly on two cases of champagne. For four days he was shut up in the store-house.

One evening, when they were just off the Banks of Newfoundland, Monsieur Alfred opened his prison and gave him permission to have a breath of air on the top-deck hidden under the life-boats. This was the only opportunity Monsieur Demystel got of enjoying the Atlantic breezes.

On reaching New York he asked his keeper when he would be able to land and see New York.

“ I don’t advise you to do that,” replied Monsieur Alfred. “ The police at the docks

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are very strict and they might arrest you for trying to evade the immigration laws.”

Terrified at the thought of being incarcerated in an American gaol, Monsieur Demystel went back to his store-house. He lived there for another ten days. And also seven more on the return journey. At last he arrived back in the good town of Havre, suffering from lumbago and rheumatism in his knees.

However, he paid Monsieur Alfred the two hundred francs, and gave a sigh of relief as he stretched himself that night in his own large, warm and comfortable bed.

.

Six months have passed since the memorable voyage. Monsieur Demystel now frequents the *Café des Voyageurs*. Sometimes his friends, the shopkeepers in the neighbourhood, talk about the New World. Then Monsieur Demystel sits up and takes notice. He raises his voice slightly, and with the assured air of a man who knows, he begins:

“ When I went to America. . . . ”

M. D.

CHAPTER I

THE PLEASURE OF THE VOYAGE

On board the André-Lebon

IN Mexico, prisoners who possess great patience and a mechanical and artistic turn of mind, make tiny little masterpieces in their spare moments, such, for example, as a flea's wedding in a nut shell. You can distinguish with a magnifying glass the different personalities in the fleas, dressed up to represent the bride, the chief bridesmaid, the relations, the clergyman and the choirboys, not to mention the crowd of fleas invited to the wedding.

Every time I go on board a liner these flea absurdities, in their nut shells, involuntarily come into my mind. Not that there are such things as fleas on the ships of the *Messageries Maritimes*, whose comfort is perfect, and whose cuisine is renowned! I speak of ourselves, we humans who cling on to the ship, lost in the ocean.

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The liner alone on the wide ocean is a microcosm in which the human passions are all represented in some form or another, like the animals in Noah's Ark. From the fourth class to the *cabine de luxe*, from the hold to the bridge, one comes across the usual cortège of pride, envy, jealousy, deceit, avarice and sensual vice. They all stew, boil, bubble, and simmer down; well up again and ferment.

First of all the children. There are plenty of them aboard—fifty perhaps. Civil servants and soldiers going to the Colonies with their families and Annamite nannies. All these people, in spite of the regulations, invade the promenade deck and turn it into a scooter track or an autodrome for Lilliputian cars. From the ages of six months to ten years they suck at their bottles, howl, scream, fight, kiss one another and refuse to go to bed.

Then there are the young girls. Fifteen to twenty years old, high school or college girls ploughed in the last exams, they are still more noisy than the little ones, above all when there are any middies aboard, going to rejoin their ships at Saigon or Shanghai.

THE PLEASURE OF THE VOYAGE

These young ladies, who call one another familiarly Loulou, Nénette, Lily, Bibi, Zonzon, Dédé have little interest in their work. This age is pitiless. It is as cruel as a Chinese executioner.

They give nicknames to the passengers, both men and women. Who of them indeed would recognize themselves under their designations: *Moumoute*, *Fried Whiting*, *Bag of Misery*, *Ostrich*, *Frizzy Fowl*, *Larksfoot*, *Strawberry and Cream*, *Bit of Cheese*, the *Serpent Man*.

Moumoute, it would seem, described a passenger who tried unsuccessfully to hide his bald pate under a wig, which did not escape the sharp eyes of these young ladies. *Fried Whiting* was a gentleman who was over liberal with the powder puff on his chin after shaving. *Bag of Misery* was a neurasthenic lady who used to stand alone on the top deck to gaze at the sea and think of her lost hopes. The *Ostrich* was a lady saddled with a profile like a bird. *Frizzy Fowl* was a pleasant young fellow furnished with an abundant head of hair which stood upright. *Larksfoot* was a good dancer, light of foot and rather fantastic. *Strawberry*

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and Cream a ruddy-complexioned dowager smothered in powder. A *Bit of Cheese* a young man with a long nose. The *Serpent Man* was the author of these lines.

I, forgive all this and a good deal more. For it doesn't matter, and who could be angry? These young girls are charming. As a German humorist says: "It is better to be bitten while alive by the pretty teeth of a cheeky *Maedel* than to be taunted, when dead, by the grin of a death's head."

A month at sea is a perpetual round of amusement and flirtation. Young people are here and there and everywhere, quarrelling at poker or bridge over the platonic affections of the Naval officers. Romantic young officers teach them to flirt with a light heart. Are they not the Lovelaces of the Naval Academy, for one of them confessed to me, one day, with delightful cynicism: "At sea one learns to change one's girl just as one changes one's ship. One day one is on a little slender torpedo boat. The next one may be in an inflexible dreadnought. It's only the crew that change. And there you are!"

THE PLEASURE OF THE VOYAGE

Anyway, our young girls can look after themselves. In Egypt one of them showed me her collection of ribbons which had on them the names of thirty cruisers, dispatch boats, destroyers, submarines, etc. . . . It is true that this young lady, known as the Little Madonna of the Suez Canal, has the power to inspire our future Jean Barts and Dumont d'Urvilles with musings during their watches!

.

And what applies to young girls applies to mammas. There are also mothers on board. This one complains discreetly that the young men do not ask her to dance but reserve their fox-trots for the young girls. That one confesses to her neighbour her hopes of marrying her niece in the colony.

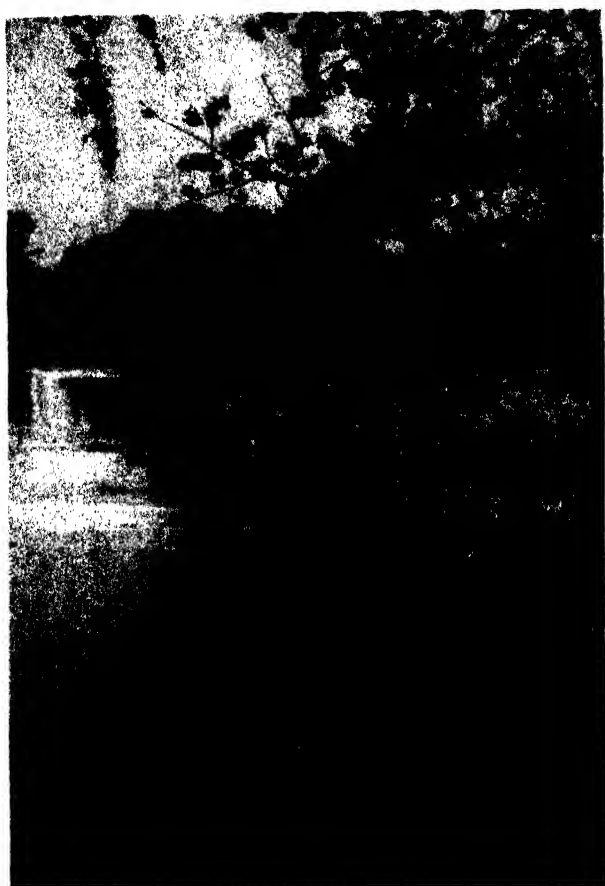
"You see, dear madame, a nice young girl without money has no chance in France. The competition is too severe. Young men are very obstinate when it is a matter of giving a ring. So they carry on in secret with brazen-faced young huzzies who have nothing to learn, oh yes! But when one says to them: 'My daughter or my niece are not for you,

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young man, for a week-end trip,' they vanish immediately saying to themselves: 'the old rhomboid is a bit out of date. . . . Bye! Bye! . . . ' While in the colonies the competition is less keen. Life is a little easier than in France notwithstanding the crisis. . . . I got my daughter married in 1931 to an engineer. She has two children. She is so happy. I hope at Saigon or Hanoi to find an infantry officer for my niece who is eighteen, and it is time she got married. She has been reading *L'Amant de Lady Chatterley* in secret, the wretched girl! I found the book under her pillow with notes in pencil such as: 'Very good. . . . Poor fool. . . . Not bad . . . etc.' "

The days seem long in the Red Sea. Mammas have time to unburden themselves of their troubles. The men as well.

There is in addition the solitary passenger who will arrive at his destination without anybody beyond the purser knowing who he is. There is always a party of three jovial souls who never leave the bar, and who organize the fêtes. These fellows know everything. They are the busy-bodies. As soon



THE KINTAR BRIDGE IN APRIL

THE PLEASURE OF THE VOYAGE

as a lady passenger talks for half an hour to her deck-chair neighbour, the three busy-bodies signal the fact and send up the flag not mentioned in the International Code, which means GOSSIP ON THE STARBOARD.

.

There is also the studious passenger who reads, from the first page to the last, all the magazines in the saloon, all the books in the library, and all the guides in the racks. The "gay-cavalier" passenger who, coming aboard at Marseilles, scours the decks to find a lady whom he can ask "to come to his cabin to smoke a cigarette." After three unfortunate attempts he inveighs against women insensible to his seductive attractions (?) and furious, avenges himself at Saigon by visiting ladies more ready to avail themselves of his company.

Unless by ingratiating himself one evening in the second or perhaps the third class bar, he succeeds in telling the tale and winning the heart of an unsophisticated young girl or overcoming the inexorable virtue of a lady who is accustomed to relieve colonials of their superfluous piastres.

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There is, last of all, the indiscreet erotomaniac who prowls at night along the corridors or the deserted decks in the hope of seeing a suggestive *déshabillé* through an opening of a cabin. Sometimes he even tries to enlarge his sphere of observation by holding a mirror down alongside the hull level with the port-holes. Thanks to this improvised periscope, he hopes to get fugitive visions suitable for illustrating the *Decameron*.

.

In Indo-China there are many Corsicans. There are always some aboard the boat, who forgather at the coffee time to talk. About what? About politics. With that great vehemence and enthusiasm which characterizes them, one of them predicts the downfall of France so long as its officials are recruited from civil life; while another wants the delegates of the League of Nations to be voted for by a plebiscite of their own countrymen.

“That would be a monstrous electoral campaign!” someone objects.

“So much the better,” he retorts. “A nation without electoral campaigns is like a pretty woman without teeth.”

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But the most amusing incident happened one day, in the Red Sea, at cocktail time. One of them appeared waving a yellow book with a very official look about it that he had found, God knows where.

“ This! ” he exclaimed, “ is the limit. Just look at this old book. . . . It contains the nautical instructions of the Hydrographic Naval Service. It’s the 1925 edition printed by the National Press. What do I find on page 278 with regard to Corsica? Listen to it: ‘ *One does not see as one used to do up in the mountains the natives (sic) walking in their leisure time in the public square.* ’ ”

“ Oh ! ” exclaimed the three other Corsicans all together. . . . “ *Natives!* ”

“ Yes, gentlemen . . . the Navy speaks of us as *natives*. We will protest against this outrage to Monsieur François Piétri.”

“ Pardon,” I said, quietly. “ But *native* is used in the etymological sense of the word. I am a native of France. And so are you! ”

“ May be, old boy, but to me *native* has an offensive ring about it and it is obviously meant so by the publisher who no doubt comes from Lyons, Picardy or Berrichon.

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. . . You cannot deny that to the ordinary man in the street a *native* has feathers in his hair and a ring in his nose. Well, when we Corsicans use a feather it is to dip in the ink of controversy.”

That very day my Corsican friends resolved to send a strong protest to our First Lord of the Admiralty.

.

After a short stay at Djibouti—where for the tenth time I saluted in the middle of the roadstead the old hulk of the *Fontainebleau* in the funnel of which a Russian emigrant had found a discreet but rather comfortless lodging—we reached Aden at dusk.

Aden the scorcher! Aden the gate to the hell of the Red Sea! Aden upon whose peninsula it was that the Queen of Sheba used to take her sun bath before the Christian era of pyjamas. The great attractions of Aden are the mermaids: the sirens in the museum. . . . A couple of them stuffed are kept for the edification of those who have read the *Odyssey*. Ulysses and his companions were certainly endowed with wonderful imagination to be able to see in these seal-like

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heads with their red lips and large myopic eyes the ravishing divinities who were able to charm Poseidon's leisure hours.

To the question—What is responsible for these absurdities? The usual reply is they are picturesque. That explanation is certainly refuted by the sirens at Aden. First of all because the sirens that are exhibited there are a male and a female. And these amphibians do not display the slightest modesty.

.

Entertainments are given on board. The little sentimental dramas begin. The skirmishes between the young girls and the midshipmen develop into single combats. The old plots of the Greek tragedies are revived. Euripides and Sophocles are adapted to present day ideas by these young *tragediennes* who prefer *Vogue* and *Femina* to *Iphigenia in Tauris* or *Electra*. Little scenes of jealousy that the morning breezes will waft away.

The bachelors who hover round that young blonde mamma fly away like frightened sparrows as soon as she shows a preference for someone else. The beautiful Slav lady

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who bursts the inflated vanity of her admirers with a clever pin-prick, says:

“ I will dance with you according to your age. . . . I will begin with the oldest of you gentlemen! ”

And so from sixty to twenty they will have the pleasure of attuning their desires to the roll of the ship.

Midnight. Midshipman No. 2 has brought his deck chair close up to his neighbour's, Mademoiselle Lulu, who allows him to caress surreptitiously the velvety skin of her fore-arm up to the bend of the elbow:

“ Would you be jealous? ”

“ That depends. Of the past, no. Of the present, oh yes! ”

“ Oh the past is past—letters torn up, photos burnt. You, you are all just like the men. You are married to a past which is now in ashes. . . . But in these ashes, there are sometimes live embers that the wind can blow into a flame. Yesterday is sometimes more dangerous than to-morrow. One of my friends, one of my shipmates is married to a twenty-five years old wife. After two years of married life she meets by accident in

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Japan a boy she had known when she was sixteen. There had been just a mild flirtation, nothing more. She fell violently in love with him and straightway their happiness was in danger. A worm was in the apple. The embers were re-lit."

"As for me, when I marry, the future will make me more afraid than the past. The past is zero. The future, on the other hand with all its dangers is unknown."

"Do you like children?"

"Not until they are thirty."

"The rumba first. Then the feeding bottle. . . . Will you come to the bar and have a drink?"

"Don't you like it here?"

"Yes, of course I do."

"I understand. . . . Nénette just went past, you want to meet her there."

"I don't care a hang for Nénette."

"But you admit you think her pretty."

"No! . . . but she's rather striking."

"You danced with her five times."

"How quick you are at figures! And you? Do you think I didn't see you go four times up and down the promenade deck with Maxime?"

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"I say, old thing, you must have an adding machine in your eye."

"Oh, go along. . . . Don't play the taxi girl."

"Ha, ha, ha! Monsieur is irritable. . . . See you to-morrow at the bathing pool, my dear. . . ."

The storm is over. The pink and white young girl gets up and runs laughing towards the orchestra. The midshipman shrugs his shoulders, furious—or blasé? He lights a cigarette and smokes pensively. The sorrow of Olympus on an ocean greyhound. . . .

To-morrow, at eleven, you will see them pacing the deck with a springy step, smiling and gay as larks. The storm will have passed. The sky will be clear. The flying fish will make notes of interrogation on the deep blue waters of happiness.

.

To-morrow we shall be in sight of Ceylon. At tea time let us make an experiment.

"Now, Mademoiselles! Let us see if we can think of the name of the nine Muses. . . . You, Simone, you only just missed



THE DEER PARK AT NARA



THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE TEMPLE OF
OTSUKUSHIMA AT MIYAJIMA

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taking your degree brilliantly. Can you tell us their names? ”

General consternation. The young ladies look at one another. The Muses? What were they? Had they names?

“ To begin with,” said Simone, “ there were not nine. . . . You’re asking me a teaser. But I’m sure there are only three.”

“ Why no, Sim! . . . You are thinking of the three fates.”

“ Come, Mademoiselle Simone. Haven’t you ever heard of Ter . . . Ter. . . . ”

“ Thermopylae? ”

“ Terpsichore, now go no! ”

“ No.”

“ And Ur . . . Ur . . . Ur. . . . ”

“ Urodonal? ”

“ Urania, tell us, come. She was the Muse of . . . of. . . . ”

“ The Muse of the chemists.”

“ Of Astronomy, come.”

“ No. . . . I don’t know. I didn’t take mythology.”

“ Well, any way, Nénette, you know Aphrodite.”

“ Aphrodite? . . . No, what is that? ”

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“Venus.”

“Oh yes, Venus . . . of course.”

Another girl who had been educated at a convent till she was twenty blushed when we asked her the names of the three Wise Men.

“Oh! I was never taught that.”

“Balthazar!” exclaimed Nénette. . . . I remember that because mamma says when she has had a good dinner: ‘We’ve had a regular Balthazar’s feast!’ ”

“And the second?”

“Clovis!” said Dédé triumphantly.

“No—Melchoir. And the third?”

“Lot! . . .”

“No, Zonzon. . . . You must know that Lot was a Philistine who melted the pillar of salt with the jawbone of an ass.”

“Wasn’t that Moses?”

“No, Gaspard! Ladies, you can console yourselves that none of the modern generation could name one and the entire cabinet would not be able to give more than four of the names of the Muses.”

As a matter of fact, the ignorance of contemporary young women is appalling. Compulsory education? A merry jest.

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If we except a few outstanding examples who, particularly clever, have taken an interest in their studies and uphold with enthusiasm feminine knowledge, the rest prefer tennis and motoring and don't know the name of a single notable person of international repute.

But why worry. One can become an excellent mother of a family or a perfect wife in spite of mistaking Aphrodite for a disease of the skin.

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At Singapore, that glittering emerald hanging on to the ear of Malay, the cinema fans have had an amusing eye-opener. While they were visiting the Zoo, they noticed a splendid tiger in a cage, one of those photogenic tigers, the Valentino or the Clark Gable of the jungle.

When they asked the keeper questions about this imposing specimen of the feline race, the Malay, in a jargon difficult to write down in all its beauty, told them:

“Fine tiger, Madame? Wonderful cinema actor. . . . Have a good look at him, Madame. . . . Don't you recognize the wicked tiger who fought with the python in the film?

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. . . He ate most of the little goat after the battle. . . . *Very good* goat for Mr. Tiger. . . . Then for to have nice goat, make him fine appetite with python who had drunk whisky and soda. . . .”

And the young ladies went sorrowfully back to the boat. They had also lost an illusion regarding those films of virgin forests which thrill the Parisians in the movie theatres in the Grand Boulevard.

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At Cape St. Jacques, at the mouth of the river Saigon, two important persons came aboard. First the pilot who will navigate the boat through the bends of the river hemmed in by innumerable mangrove trees. Then a police officer who brings the official document showing the destinations of the civil servants in the colony.

For twenty-five days, they have been anxiously waiting to know where they will be sent. Hence the rush to the bar when the prophetic sheet is posted up. Monsieur X . . . a second class administrator smiles. His dream has come true. He wanted to go to Cambodia.

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He will go. Monsieur Z . . . in the Customs Service counted on being sent to Tonquin. He is posted to Saigon. He is furious. Madame W . . . is upset!

“ Rotten Government! . . . As if they couldn't have told us before we packed our kit in France! My husband was sure he would be staying on in Cochin China. So, I've brought thin dresses for a tropical climate. He is sent to Dalat, 4,500 feet. . . . I shall freeze up there, I haven't a warm coat to my name. If Emile had any go in him he would have been on the State Council by now. . . . It's a downright case of bullying, Madame. . . . You'll see me in Riviera pyjamas up there in the mountains! ”

.

The crisis, with its grim countenance, has made itself felt in Indo China as elsewhere. Where are the orgies and the merry nights of days gone by, when one earned more piastres than one could spend.

The cafés in the rue Catinat are only half full except on the days a boat arrives. The night clubs are bankrupt. The cinemas are almost empty. The rubber planters who used

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to earn five or six millions a year have drawn in their horns. They are awaiting better times. . . . The Stevenson plan is dead. . . . Here's to the future!

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The radio authorities on board the boats have strange ideas. The mysterious people who rule its destiny have had the happy brain-wave of introducing an ocean-letter which permits, from China seas, for instance, twenty words to be sent for twenty francs fifty. On arrival at Marseilles the wireless message is sent by post to its destination. But if you want to send a wireless message to a friend on a boat fifty miles from yours, you have to pay four francs a word. The result is that passengers do not use this prohibitive tariff and the machines lie idle. Passengers not familiar with the rules of the wireless criticise bitterly this extraordinary method of doing business.

And they are no less amazed at the amazing way in which the press service is administered. A Frenchman who embarks for thirty days and who, for a month, loses all contact

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with European newspapers, would be grateful if a selection of the news were sent to him every day. Well, the Daily Press Bulletin posted up each morning seems to ignore common sense and logic.

One day, half the sheet was given up to the description of a football match between Sète and Toulon. Another day we had thirty lines (and God knows that every line is valuable) upon the visit of Brazilian doctors to Vichy! One is staggered to see costly transmission wasted on subjects that are devoid of general interest, when there is, every day, plenty of news worthy of being transmitted to passengers. The mysterious person who presides over the editing of the wireless sheet seems to pick out, on principle, news which ought to be consigned to the waste paper basket.

I am assured that the Quai d'Orsay is responsible for this service. On behalf of travellers on board our boats, ploughing the distant seas, I beg the Minister for Foreign Affairs to set aside one day, five minutes to the study of this matter. Everyone would be grateful to him if he would improve this little daily paper.

CHAPTER II

ARRIVAL IN JAPAN

Kobé

IT was aboard a little Japanese boat that we had the pleasure of greeting the *Choko-Maru*, coming from Tiensien, the land of the Rising Sun. After a rough voyage along the coast of Corea, we entered at last into the calm waters of the Straits of Shimonoseki. It is the fortified zone, the zone in which kodaks are prohibited. For as you leave Shimonoseki an extremely severe espionage system, a complaint from which the Japanese suffer very badly, is in force.

The Japanese is a charming host who smiles amicably at his visitors. But he is also a suspicious host who is afraid that one is eyeing surreptitiously the make of the little chopsticks with which one eats; he is a host upon the *qui vive* who scents a secret agent in all foreigners who come to see him.



A TWELVE YEAR OLD PUPIL IN THE SCHOOL
FOR GEISHAS

ARRIVAL IN JAPAN

The prohibition of kodaks is a proof of this malady. You would hardly expect it, considering that naval officers of foreign warships, officially allowed in Japanese waters, have photographed during their cruises all strategic and interesting features along the coast. What matter! The inoffensive tourist who does not know the difference between concrete cupola and a mushroom bed is made to put his camera under lock and key when he approaches Shimonoseki.

Outside Moji, the first port of call, Japanese Immigration officers come on board. They speak excellent English and question—courteously, of course—with inexorable insistence the foreign tourist.

An American tourist was once being questioned at great length by an inspector, who suddenly asked him:

“ And where was your grandfather born? ”

The American, who did not know, answered at random, saying:

“ At Pittsburg.”

This information was carefully noted. A year or two later he returned to Japan and underwent the same kind of questioning by

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another inspector. Suddenly the useless question was put:

“Where was your grandfather born?”

The American hesitated. He had quite forgotten his reply of the previous year. He answered:

“At Boston.”

The inspector referred to his papers, knitted his brows and looked suspiciously at the American.

“Sir. . . . You said on May 7th, 1932, that your honourable grandfather was born at Pittsburg. To-day you say that the same grandfather was born at Boston. . . . How do you explain the discrepancy?”

The American thought for a minute. Then, with a knowing smile, he answered:

“Sir. . . . I can explain most naturally—one was born at Pittsburg and the other at Boston. For, as everybody knows and you also, I have both a maternal and a paternal grandfather.”

.

The Japanese are afraid of two things—spies and microbes.

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Indeed, on coming from China, one cannot help appreciating the cleanliness of the country, the houses and the inhabitants. After the smelly pigsties, you have the immaculate wash-houses. Cholera, especially, fills them with a holy horror and one cannot blame them. As soon as an epidemic is notified in the Far East, passengers on ships reaching Japan are subjected to rigorous discipline, carried out by the Japanese Ministry of Health. Everyone is given a necessary utensil which is numbered and the contents examined. All medical tests and analyses are made.

The doctor on a liner plying between Europe and Japan told us, one day, of an amusing incident that he had seen which would have gladdened the heart of Armand Sylvestre.

Between Shimonoseki and Kobé, the purser of the boat in question discovered a stowaway on board—a Chinaman who had secretly hidden in a store-room in order to get, without paying any fare, to the country of Madame Chrysanthemum. Having been discovered behind a coil of rope the delinquent was arrested and shut up between-decks.

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Outside Kobé the official doctor of the Ministry of Health came aboard to make his inspection and analyses. The purser of the ship had, naturally, to report to the authorities the presence of a clandestine Chinese passenger. The first question by the Japanese was:

“ Have I examined and made his analysis? ”

“ No.”

“ Then, bring him here.”

The ship's doctor was despatched to do this. And this is how he described what took place:

“ I went to the emigrants' quarters and made my Chinaman, who spoke excellent English, come along with me:

“ ‘ Come on, Chang! . . . The Japanese want you.’

“ At this the Chinaman changed colour. He then threw himself at my feet and began to groan:

“ ‘ No . . . no . . . Master Doctor. . . . The Japanese will shoot me . . . have mercy, hide me.’

“ ‘ No they won't, you fool. . . . They aren't going to hurt you. Come, follow me!’

“ It needed three sailors to carry him,

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green with fear, to the Immigration officer, to go through the usual formalities.

“ At the sight of Japanese my Chinaman went raving mad and tried to get away—for he knew that Japan and China were at war—and we had the greatest difficulty in the world to prevent him from throwing himself overboard. At length, we overpowered him and the Japanese nurse, wearing a white blouse over her kimono, handed him a suitable utensil and bidding him go behind the screen, told him that he must perform the necessary duty for analysis which, under the circumstances, he did not find difficult. When he realized that that was all that was required of him, and that he was not going to be killed, he threw himself at my feet and thanked me. He was sure that my intervention had saved him from a terrible death.”

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Personally I did not experience the same emotion as the Chinaman, but the Immigration officers drew my attention to the fact that my passport was out of date (which I had overlooked) and according to the law I

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could only land if someone would be responsible for my good conduct at Kobé.

When the boat came alongside the quay, a Japanese, who accompanied some friends, fortunately offered to comply with the necessary formalities. He made many signs and characters on a large sheet of paper. And although he had never seen me before, certified:

1st. That he knew my parents, my grandparents and my great-grandparents.

2nd. That I had never been in prison in my own country.

3rd. That I harboured no hostile intention towards the Government of the country.

4th. That I had enough money for board and lodging during my stay.

5th. That I had not had measles for five years.

6th. That I did not wish to preach Communism to the Nippon proletariat.

7th. That I would leave Japan without owing any money.

This certificate of my good behaviour, my intimate friend, whose name I did not know, signed and sealed.

CHAPTER III

JAPANESE PSYCHOLOGY

Yokohama

NOTHING is more dangerous than to arrive in Japan with preconceived ideas about the part that Japan is called upon to play on the Asiatic chessboard. There have been socialist writers of the extreme left, hypnotised by their own political opinions and by reading innumerable articles written in Europe upon Japanese Imperialism, who in the name of Karl Marx, Bebel and Jaurès condemn the Japanese straight away. But I will return later to this Imperialism which makes these biased critics' blood boil.

In fact, whoever studies Japan without preconceived opinions not in the partisan spirit, but with an open and independent mind uninfluenced by reactionary ideas or Bolshevism, will admit that he is incapable of understanding thoroughly the Japanese mind.

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Superficially, yes. Thoroughly, no.

Do you remember Lafcadio Hearn, who made this striking statement regarding educated Japanese.

“ When, after five or six years, you discover that you do not in the least understand the mind of the Japanese, then you will be able to say that you know its chief characteristic.”

I reached Tokio in December. Her Majesty the Empress had just given birth to the Crown Prince. A son had been born in the palace, and the arrival filled the whole nation with delight. Japanese journalists, who had given me a hearty welcome at Kobé, roused me that morning about eight o'clock to inform me of the good news. Still half-asleep I was urged to express my satisfaction at this happy event. This enthusiastic ringing up on the telephone is now a Japanese custom. For one can hardly imagine a Parisian journalist telephoning to a foreign visitor at daybreak to tell him with deep emotion that the President of the Republic has just become a proud father.

The birth of the little prince also furnished other evidence, illustrating the wonderful mentality of the Japanese. First of all on

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December 29th at the baptism. On that day the Mayor of Tokio invited ten thousand notable citizens of the capital to the Hibya park. The ten thousand came dressed in the black coat and striped trousers that the Englishmen wear as morning dress. At eleven o'clock these ten thousand loyal subjects of the Emperor Hirohita acclaimed with repeated *Banzai-s* the news announced by the President of the Council, who informed them officially that the young Prince had just been baptised Tsuguno Miya Akihito.

I left this ceremony along with numerous Tokio citizens carrying presents from the municipality, such, for instance, as: A small white symbolical loaf, coloured sweets, and a little bowl of saké, precious souvenirs of the birth of the future emperor.

As we mingled with the crowd I asked myself:

“What morning function in France would bring together ten thousand Parisians all, without exception, dressed in morning coats and striped trousers?”

In the afternoon we were able to make another mental note of the marvellous discipline

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which gives the Japanese nation its moral force. It was at the Meiji temple, a temple built in pure Shinto style, erected to the memory of the Emperor Meiji, the real founder of modern Japan, the first artisan of its greatness. He is naturally revered by the Japanese.

That day five hundred thousand children from the Tokio schools, boys and girls, from seven to fifteen years of age, marched past the front of the famous temple. It was an imposing symbolical spectacle, which could not fail to inspire the most indifferent with salutary reflections. Each section of the children was led by a master or professor, generally a little man with spectacles or *pince-nez*, wearing a black coat and grey striped trousers.

As they halted in front of the sanctuary, the schoolmaster stepped forward three paces, bowed low three times, imitated by the children, who followed his lead. Then the procession went on, now in the direction of the Imperial park where hundreds of thousands of children waved their little flags and without even seeing the palace, acclaimed him in front of a wall behind which was the building where the

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little baby lay. This was the Son of God on earth, appointed to guide later on his people along the path of Eternal Triumph.

For, don't forget, we shall never understand the Japanese if we do not realize that they are descended from the gods and that they alone have the privilege of calling themselves the chosen race, the race with the divine right.

One can say definitely that out of ninety million Japanese there are not ten thousand emancipated persons, or ten thousand sceptics who do not absolutely believe in their faith.

Can we then be astonished at the fervid patriotism of this great nation which proclaims with pride its power and the magnitude of its destiny?

One must realize that this national pride of the youth of Japan is encouraged and maintained by official literature which the Government distributes and in which, naturally, European nations do not appear in a very good light.

An article was published, for example, in a Japanese magazine, in which the author expressed himself as follows:

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“The Western woman adorns herself with furs, because she is so closely akin to the brute beasts that she wears their skins on her back. These animals are her brothers.” (*sic*)

We need hardly be surprised after that if the ordinary Japanese has a very thinly disguised contempt for the Western races. The educated and travelled Japanese who has lived in Europe is better informed and disapproves of this kind of exaggeration. But everyone knows that the intellectual *élite* in Japan as in other countries does not represent one per cent of the population.

Mr. O’Conroy, an Englishman, a professor at the University of Keio, who was for years in close contact with studious young men, sons of the nobility and the upper middle classes, tells a curious story, which shows clearly the working of the Japanese mind, so very different from our own:

One day, the professor lent to one of his pupils an English novel, translated into Japanese, and a little later asked him to give him a synopsis of it. He wanted to find out to what extent his young Japanese brain had grasped this Western tale.

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The student hit upon the following passage: it happened that a traveller after a long walk in the country had stopped at an inn called the *White Horse*. The Japanese translator had interpreted the English as follows:

“As we got near the inn we saw a white horse hanging out of the window.”

The translator had added a few lines to explain that in certain instances the English have the custom of hanging horses from the windows of their houses. For, this particular translator thought that in this case a live horse was going to be eaten!

The English professor had to explain to the student, who was astonished, that it was one of the signs that inns often adopted—White Horse, Red Lion, Blue Pig, etc., etc. . .

He imagined that the young man had quite understood. The next day he met two other of his students who, very embarrassed, asked him if he had not been having a joke with them. Because, having asked their parents about it, they were told that in no country in the world, not even in England, were there red lions or blue pigs.

This experience of Mr. O'Conroy is by no

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means peculiar. Personally, in the course of my conversation with Japanese friends who spoke excellent English, I discovered how difficult it is for them to avoid these mistakes and to understand us. How many times have I had to repeat whole phrases in order to be sure that they had followed my train of thought. It was certainly owing to no ill will on their part but everything goes to show that Japanese and European brains, like two types of motors, do not work with the same speed.

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One cannot, however, deny the exemplary perseverance of Japanese students, who, before they study any particular science, have to make a great effort to assimilate its language in which are mixed innumerable Chinese and Kana characters symbolising sounds such as: *Ka, sa, ta, na, ha, ki, shi, chi, ni, hi*, etc., etc.

In addition to their own language which is so difficult, Japanese students have to learn French or English. But it is the latter language which has the most scholars, for all traders in the Far East speak it, more or less badly. One

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is not surprised, therefore, to find in Japan amusing notices in which the language of Sheridan is seasoned with Japanese sauce. Tristan Bernard would find another chapter for *L'Anglais tel qu'on le parle*.

On the door of a shop where they sell eggs:

Here we sell the extract of fowls.

In a photographer's window:

We execute the Photographer.

At a tailor's:

Monkey Jackets

European Style, for Japanese.

At a Wine and Spirit Merchant's:

Foreign Wines in Sealed Bottles.

A Speciality of St. Julien.

Put into bottles by Mr. Bordo.

If you buy a bottle of beer, Fuji brand—in honour of the famous mountain—on the label you will find:

The Efficaciousness of this Beer is to give Health and Above all Strength to the Stomach. The Bouquet is so sweet and so simple that you won't be Ill if You Drink a Lot of It.

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But what do you think of this piece of publicity for the scented wine of Koza:

If the Health is not Stable the Heart is not Active. When the Heart is Active One Can do things. Among the Ways of Preserving Good Health the Best is to buy Koza Wine that we Sell Because it Helps Digestion and Increases the Blood. It is Pleasant to Females and to the Offspring who are not able to Drink Alcohol, Because it is Too Sweet.

Would you like to know the opinion of a young Japanese student of England? This is how he sums up the young sons of John Bull:

“The Englishman has the greatest Empire in which he rarely lives. The Englishman works with a strong hand, long legs and also with a lofty spirit. His chin is as hard as iron. He never lets go what he gets hold of. The English are cunning in founding a great Empire which he calls Paradise. The Englishman has always said to other nations: Give us your country and I will give you a good testimonial. So that is not robbery, it is an exchange.”

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Japanese logic baffles the Western mind and although this little poem does not conform to the orthodox canons of logic, it is worthy of a brain, to which the works of Aristotle have no secrets:

*Because I am convinced
That the real is no longer
Real,
How can I admit
That dreams are dreams?*

But it is equally true that when one talks to a Japanese it is necessary to get accustomed to his way of replying. At the beginning of my stay I often misunderstood people to whom I spoke. For instance, talking to a friend I said to him:

“ You did not send me that book.”

And he replied:

“ Oh yes.”

Well that means no. Because he meant to say: “ Yes, I have not sent it to you.”

Also, as soon as he gets to Japan, the foreigner ought to make himself familiar with certain elementary facts of everyday life. For

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example the address on an envelope is written like this:

JAPAN TOKIO
722 GINZA STREET
SAKURAI Mr.

We say:

“ I found four or five interesting articles at the antique shop.”

A Japanese says:

“ I found five or four interesting articles.”

When one buys a tea service, it does not consist of half a dozen or a dozen cups, but five or ten. Although extremely polite, as everyone knows, the Japanese precedes his wife when he goes in or out. When he builds a house he begins at the roof. As in China white is the colour of mourning and black the colour for weddings.

When you buy twelve dozen serviettes instead of one you naturally expect to find the price for the gross at any rate reduced from the price of a single one. The Japanese shopkeeper does not reason in that way. He thinks that if you buy twelve dozen serviettes you must need them very much and you will

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therefore be willing to pay a little more for them.

When we enumerate on our fingers a series of items, saying, for example: firstly . . . secondly . . . thirdly . . . we generally stretch out the thumb, the first finger and the middle finger from the palm of the hand. The Japanese, like the Chinese also, does the contrary. He bends his thumb, first finger and the middle finger into the palm of his hand.

Numberless writers have criticised Japan, described its customs, analysed its soul and its psychology. There is not one of them probably who has been more wide of the mark than Pierre Loti. The author of *Madame Chrysanthème* has without doubt described with art, and with deep poetical feeling the customs of the country. But his predictions, as to the future of Japan, are so inaccurate that one cannot re-read them without smiling.

Pierre Loti, twenty years ago, found Japan: "Small, ancient and worn out." He saw her at the end of her tether as a nation, a mere apology, perfectly grotesque! If Loti came back to earth, he would be amazed, non-

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plussed, astounded. He would soon realise that he had made a mistake in the choice of his epithets and instead of "buffoonery and ridicule" he ought to have written "regeneration and power"—They are absolutely convinced, as I have said, of their superiority over the whole world!

This belief among the Japanese is surely crystallized in the question that a young student of twenty-two years of age put to me:

"Do you in France have gramophones?"

CHAPTER IV

JAPANESE PATRIOTISM

To penetrate into Japan is to enter into the warm hot-house of patriotism. That is a statement of fact which calls forth both admiration and anxiety from the resident foreigner.

I do not mean to say that the people of the West are wanting in patriotism, but with us, especially in France, it is, so to speak, sporadic and manifests itself only in critical moments. It does not in the least resemble the patriotism of the Japanese who is constant and expresses every day, every hour, the uninterrupted and feverish condition of his mind, and his love of collectivity.

All pleasure lovers, all sceptics, all those who think internationally, all despisers of frontiers, all those who proudly say: "Europe is my country!" all insulters of national flags, all Utopians of the universal fraternity, all Frenchmen who shrug their shoulders when they see people salute a flag as it passes, all

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Frenchmen who guffaw under their breath when they see an Englishman stand to attention at *God Save the King*, all Frenchmen who smoke their cigarette and put their hands in their pockets at the playing of the *Marseillaise*, all French mud-slingers, scoffers, and members of the "Advanced Thought" ought to come and visit Japan, live amongst the Japanese and hear the heart-beats of this amazing country. Then they would have some real understanding of the word patriotism.

What's the use of definitions! Patriotism may be, according to Balzac: "The momentary negation of personal interests" or, according to Gerano: "An instinct which becomes a virtue." Whether it be instinct or virtue it obsesses the Japanese mind. Since 1868, it has burnt into it, it has enflamed and devoured it in the shadow of Fuji Yama.

Fanned by the victory over the Russia of the Czars, it has not ceased to grow in intensity. Cultivated by the Japanese family, this mother-germ, patriotism, is here, neither foreign nor limited to moments of distress. It is a lasting condition of national hyperaesthesia which inspires a spirit of sacrifice, passion to duty to

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the Emperor even to voluntary death by hara-kiri.

It would be, perhaps, a bold thing to aver that Japanese patriotism has been magnified by their victory over European soldiers; but one cannot deny that it has increased the intensity of the spirit of conquest born after the defeat of Russia in the plains of Manchuria. It was logical enough that Japanese patriotism should lead to the increase of the population. Birth control is the conception of a nation that is satisfied, successful, a little blasé, tired of developing itself, and attacked by the bacillus of extraordinary egotism. A country which, on the contrary, has known, since the revival of 1868, victories over China, Russia, Germany (War of 1914) and the New China (Chapei and Manchukuo), a nation whose alliance was sought not long ago by England, has great difficulty in putting a check on her megalomaniacs, and willingly limiting her expansion.

The success of her arms increases this longing for power which, in short, conforms to the conceptions of a race chosen by the Gods. Ambition grows in the hearts of the victors.

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One can say that no other nation has followed such an ascending curve in so short a time. No white race possesses a *Yasukuni jinja*, that temple devoted to absolute nationalism or the cult of violent patriotism which inflames all those who feel honoured to die for their country. Individualism, that poison which looks upon each individual of the nation as a living entity, has never gnawed at the Japanese.

One evening, having the opportunity of talking to two Japanese airmen, two young officers hardly thirty years of age, I spoke to them regarding an eventual conflict with the U.S.S.R. We weighed up the respective chances of these two nations who might one day find themselves face to face:

“ You know better than anyone,” I said to them, “ that Russian aviation is powerful and well organized. I agree that the Trans-Siberian railway is unreliable, and that the Red infantry would be poor opponents to your troops. But the Russian airmen? ”

“ What about them? ”

“ I am assured that the skill of the Soviet airmen is very great, that their material is

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excellent, that their bombing machines would prove a serious menace to your towns which are not far from their base, at the doors of Manchukuo? ”

“ And what do you deduce from that? ”

“ It is for you to draw conclusions, gentlemen.”

Then one of the two officers made this memorable reply:

“ My conclusion is very simple, sir. . . . Do you know what an airman feeling his inferiority against a large bombing plane which is about to destroy the lives of his countrymen does? *He goes full tilt at him.* . . . There are a great number of us who, in days gone by, have sacrificed their lives and, failing other means, we would make a leap on to the top of the enemy's planes which adventured into our sky. . . . By that means we should have the honour of dying usefully for our emperor and our country.”

I offer this Cornelian reply for the approval of all the soldiers of the world.

CHAPTER V

THE JAPANESE CHARM

Kamakura

THE day of my arrival in sight of the coast of Japan, when I was opposite Moji, a kilometre from the shore, several Japanese journalists came and asked me what I thought of Japanese women.

Unless I had had a previous existence and had lived in a village in Hokkaido or on the edge of the lake at Hakone, it was difficult to reply. So I was at pains to praise to my Japanese *confrères*, not the beauty of their women but the activity of their cement works, the chief industry of Moji.

It is very dangerous to put a label on the women of each country. If one were to ask a Japanese to describe in a few words his view of French, English and American women, he would be at a loss, for every woman is a cock-tail of good qualities and failings which, mixed by a man of taste, make woman an angel or a

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demon, an insupportable creature or an ideal companion.

As regards the Japanese, I think one word, and only one word sums her up—grace.

It is difficult to find anywhere on earth such grace in the movements of hands, body and neck, and in general bearing. All men who appreciate beauty of gesture and harmony of pose must be impressed by this Japanese gift.

If our dear Baudelaire had known them he would not have written that he hated “ movement which displaces lines! . . . ”

Her smile and her gaiety are two other elements of charm possessed by the Japanese. The European who is accustomed to the cavalier manners of many of our Western women, and above all of Americans, is at once attracted by the gentle grace and engaging ways of the Japanese women. For, alas! we no longer live in an age in which the young lady who brings us our food kneels gracefully on entering the room before handing it to us, and hastens to offer us a light for our cigarette. In Europe, in 1911, our women smashed the shop windows with hammers in order to get the vote. And without wishing to

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wound Mrs. Pankhurst, champion English window breaker, one may prefer the kimono to the stiff-collar of the spectacled feminists.

The over-rapid evolution of Western manners and the war of 1914 have alas, incited women to ape man, to consider him, if not as an enemy, at any rate as an adversary or a rival that one does not win by charm, but has to be kept at a distance as one elbows one's way in the struggle for life.

It is the greatest mistake that woman can make. The mannish woman is a monster that nature has not foreseen. She wanders at will instead of being, as she should be, preserved in spirits of wine in a Natural History Museum.

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A few emancipated Japanese, fascinated by the creations of our dressmakers, dream, as they turn over the pages of *Vogue* or *Femina*, of dressing like the women of Paris, London and New York. In my humble opinion, it would be a crime on their part to want to give up their kimonos in order to wear Western skirts.

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The national costumes in every country symbolize their local manners and customs. To-day country girls, in Europe, prefer to discard their beautiful provincial dresses and adopt the fashion of the moment. They make a grievous mistake in coming and kneeling at the Altar of "Ready-Mades"!

The day when the Japanese say good-bye to their kimonos, or the Chinese burn their long robes, which are so becoming, or the Hindus want to give up their saris, which suit them so admirably, or the Mohammedan women refuse to wear their yashmak, or the Spanish ladies throw their shawls and mantillas to the dogs, all the women in the world will be clothed in dresses manufactured 500,000 at a time in huge dress factories on the same gigantic scale as Henry Ford's motor works!

The world will have lost its local colour. The picturesque will have vanished for ever. And the whole of humanity will be dressed in the same style, and will resemble an enormous ants' nest, in which all garments will be standardised. We shall then have five hundred million men wearing the same

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suit, the same hat and the same cap. Five hundred million women in black, yellow or rose-pink dresses cut to the same pattern, hair dressed *du bibi international*! What a terrible thought! And in order to obtain any relief and get a little originality, it will be necessary to visit the negroes and negresses of Central Africa, or the cannibals of New Guinea.

We are already threatened by world uniformity. If women help it along, poets, artists and the last lovers of beauty and originality will only have one resource left—to take each other's hands and jump into the crater of Mount Mihara to get away from an earth which will have become uninhabitable for people of taste.

So I beg you, Madame Peach Blossom, be faithful to your national garments which are a delight to the eye; be faithful to your head-dress and to your traditions. Let men import from Europe big guns, machine guns, diabolical inventions of science, but be satisfied to charm them. A sweet smile is a more dangerous weapon than a six-chambered revolver.

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Do you remember the story of that Chinese general, in the Sung period, who laid siege to a town? The enemy commander resisted every assault. The general at length had the sudden inspiration of sending him a very pretty woman who was told to parley with him. She was conducted to the commander who asked her:

"Where are the general's terms? Where are your papers?"

"Under my dress," said the ambassadress, lowering her eyes.

"We will discuss them this evening, Madame."

Then the woman sent this message to the general:

"Instead of turning me out forthwith the enemy commander has agreed to talk to me to-night. He is lost."

As a matter of fact the next day the town surrendered and the victorious general replied to his officers who acclaimed him:

"Gentlemen, the glances of a woman carry further than the arrow of the bowman."

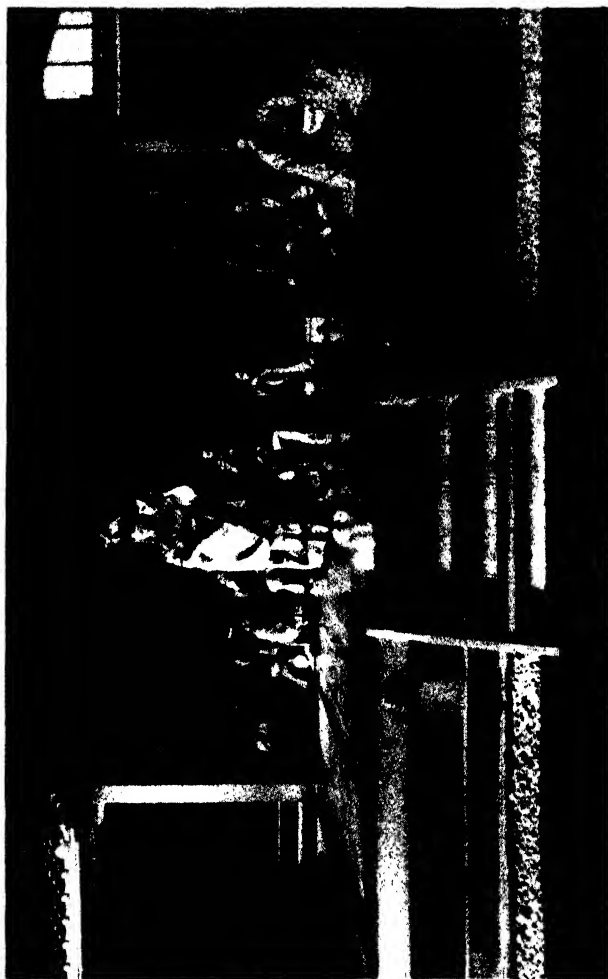
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Make-up is an incomplete art in Japan. The Japanese ladies have much to learn in this matter. What a pity to see the pretty faces of the Geishas powdered with dead white like some choice fruit that one might have rolled in flour! I suppose that tradition demands it, just as it does the obi, the knot on the kimono which must be tied according to the rules, and the dressing of the hair which must be rolled according to the custom of a thousand years! The face and neck must be covered with a thick white powder which makes them look like bits of porcelain. The Japanese are unaware that Rachel powder has been invented, rose and ochre powders made to suit the tint of the complexion without giving it that corpse-like appearance.

Another tradition: the upper lip is powdered white, the lower one is touched up with rouge. Why not redden the two lips and not offer only half a mouth to the eye?

Some charming Japanese who are not Geishas also use dead white powder which strikes harshly against the colour of their jet black hair. It causes a brutal contrast of tints



THE "NO"—ONE OF THE CLASSIC DANCES

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which offends the eye. The Western eye, evidently. For the Japanese does not seem to be repelled.

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Let us now pass to the sentimental weapons that the Japanese women use in this little daily warfare—the battle of love.

As far as a foreigner can judge, it seems that the Japanese woman's weapons are:

- 1st. Her smile.
- 2nd. Gentleness.
- 3rd. Timidity.
- 4th. Submission to the law of the male.

In military language a general would say that these were defensive weapons. In other words, smiles and gentleness are wooden swords and cardboard pistols. In the duel of love the Japanese woman opposes her smile and her gentleness to the combative spirit of her adversary. Well, their smile is their charm. It is modest, amiable, questioning or beseeching; it is, so to speak, the *hors d'œuvre* of the love feast. A woman's smile can have far-reaching effects, it is true, but only when it

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is the skirmish which provokes the enemy. Imagine two boxers in the ring. One of them is satisfied with giving the other little taps on the fore-arm or the shoulders. . . . The latter takes them for feints and awaits the serious attack.

Madame Peach Blossom's smile is the little tap of the boxer. She is feeling her way. I knew in Peking a beautiful Chinese woman celebrated for her coquetry; a vamp renowned for her success with men. She honoured me one day with her confidences, and explained to me why she was so successful in her career as a vanquisher of generals:

"You see," she explained with a laugh, "to smile sweetly at a man when you wish to conquer, is like throwing a little stone at a sleeping wolf. . . . Woe betide you if you have not the claws and teeth to defend yourself, when he awakes."

As regards Japanese women, I have questioned their fellow countrymen and almost all have replied that the chief fault they have to find with their women is their timidity.

One of them, who wore European dress and spoke excellent English, even added:

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“ I admit it. The Japanese women annoy me with their shyness ! As soon as one pays them a compliment or is polite to them, they immediately drop their heads, blush, and hide their faces in the sleeves of their kimonos.”

“ It is a charming gesture.”

“ Yes, but I should prefer that they replied with a nod or a wink ! ”

There you have Madame Peach Blossom's shyness put in the pillory. I am not referring, naturally, to the Westernized women who are afraid of nothing, nor to some of the Tokio or Osaka girl students, who are more American than the college girls of Philadelphia. Shyness with Japanese women is the outcome of tradition. A very up-to-date Japanese lady told me: “After centuries of slavery, how can you expect anything else? You might just as well reproach them for their shyness as find fault with a hedge warbler because it does not know how to swim ! ”

In the same way certain calm, gentle, romantic and sentimental men appreciate this shyness as a symbol of purity (not always!) and allow themselves to be won over by that

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gentleness which appeals to them as their ideal of womanhood.

To deliver the Japanese woman from this absolute submission and from the attitude of the poor little frightened animal that she so often appears to be, some people suggest that it is necessary for her to discard her dress and wear European clothes. I don't believe it. It is not the wearing of the kimono which prevents the Japanese woman from escaping from her cage and starting out on the conquest of the world.

Mademoiselle Ichikawa wrote recently that it would take many years of indefatigable work before the Japanese women could obtain the liberty and authority of their Western neighbours. That may be so. But it is not only in the field of politics that Japanese women must progress. Will their happiness be found in a right to vote and will their ambitions be satisfied when they have elected to their House of Commons Mademoiselle Dragon-who-Delights or Mademoiselle Spring-time?

In 1931 the supporters of woman's rights in the Japanese National Assembly did not succeed in winning their motion. They

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were beaten by the Opposition, and the upholders of the old order.

Two years later, in 1933, when Mr. Hirota was Foreign Minister, the Woman's Suffrage Movement won popular favour. The emancipation of women became the question of the day. On the one side, the Government officials and the Militarists encouraged the Feminist Defence Organization, The Women Officers' Association, etc. . . . Others, prompted by a desire for Women's Political Freedom, supported a more Liberal and Pacifist Campaign. I met in Tokio several very emancipated ladies—politically speaking—who told me of their experiences at the Fourth National Congress for Woman's Suffrage. They had asked the powers that be to reduce military expenditure and to consider disarmament. They had even suggested an entente with China. But without any success. And these ladies concluded sadly with:

“ Our proposition did not please the partisans of feudalism and the slavery of woman. . . . Tradition before everything! ”

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“What, in short, is the legal position of women in Japan?” I asked these Amazons of Feminism.

And one of them gave me the following interesting facts:

“The Civil Code of Japan, since 1919, has been attacked by reformers. In 1927 a commission was appointed to examine it. Up to the present, it has been satisfied with good intentions. . . . As regards the position of the married woman in Japan, you must understand that the old code insists upon her slavery. The projects under discussion, if they were adopted, would assure us at once of a better status. Under the present laws we have not the right to oppose the adoption of *shochi*, that is to say of children born to our husband outside marriage. The new suggested law would compel the husband to obtain the consent of his wife before he adopted the child of a concubine. More than that, the wife would have to give her approval before the husband could let his natural children inherit in the same way as his legitimate ones. The members of the committee also propose to recognize as legal unions the

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liaisons which are well known to the public. And also women will, in the future, be less helpless in the matter of divorce. At present, when a Japanese woman is guilty of adultery, her husband can obtain a divorce at once. In the future wives will obtain their divorce as easily, in cases of infidelity, as husbands. As you perceive, this change in the law would greatly improve the social and moral position of the Japanese woman. Unfortunately, as usual, routine, old customs, masculine egotism will hold back, perhaps for a long time yet, the triumph of these just reforms."

These were the remarks of the lady in a kimono who handled the most modern ideas as skilfully as the traditional chopsticks.

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It is not a chapter, but an entire book, a library that one could write on the Japanese woman—an anachronism, a little tame white mouse crouching terrified in your hand ; that delicious little person who, even in 1936, *is still afraid of man*.

Can it be that their qualities have hitherto appealed to their own compatriots, for a

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Japanese psychologist has written this significant phrase:

“ If our men, with their thinly-veiled vulgarity and immodest ways can be considered as paragons of our race, then our women must be looked upon as angels! ”

It is a severe criticism. But Kayserling, during a stay in Japan, has also been struck by the attraction of the Japanese woman, who “ does not pretend to be anything more than a woman, who does not want to bluff anybody and who is as straight as a die.”

One of the most astonishing peculiarities of the Japanese woman is her way of speaking. Who would imagine that a Japanese mother does not use the same formula when she speaks to her daughter as when she speaks to her son. A French mother would say to her son or to her daughter:

“ Are you going out? ”

A Japanese mother would inquire from her daughter:

“ *Iku kai?* ”

But, in asking her seven year old boy, she would be more polite:

“ *Irashaimasu kai?* ”

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If a Japanese invokes the moon he calls it "*Tsuki*." If a Japanese woman invokes the moon she addresses it much more politely: "*O Tsuki sama*" (Madame the honourable moon!).

One day, a Japanese woman, married to a business man in Yokohama, enumerated to me the five outstanding duties of a wife and mother:

"If you want to know what are the duties of a Japanese married woman, I will give you them in their proper order:

- 1st. To wait on her husband.
- 2nd. To attend to her children.
- 3rd. To keep her house tidy.
- 4th. To follow scrupulously the rules of politeness (the *rei*).
- 5th. To have the ritual of tea at her finger ends."

"What do you mean by waiting on your husband?"

"To be at his disposal at any hour of the day or night. . . . In short, his slave."

"I am told that Japanese husbands are the most exacting in the world. Is it true?"

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The lady smiled, looking slightly embarrassed, and replied:

"I do not know about the husbands of other countries. But as regards Japanese wives, you can say to the wives of your country that when our husband claps his hands 999 out of a thousand of us run to him like a little dog. A French woman, a friend of mine, told me that if she drops her bag her husband rushes to pick it up and politely hands it back to her. What an amazing revelation, and how my friends and myself laughed when we heard it. With us, it is exactly the reverse. If a Japanese husband drops anything his wife hastens to pick it up and gives it back to him deferentially. That seems to me quite natural."

"In fact, between your husband and your children, your life is one long round of devotion and sacrifice?"

"It must be so."

"But is your husband faithful to you?"

"I think that mine is. Anyway he understands Western ways and out of the generosity of his heart he hides his distractions from me, if he indulges in any. But all my friends are not so lucky as I am."

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“What do you mean by that?”

The lady hesitated, but she ended up by explaining to me:

“I have a little friend, Madame Thousand-Delights, who was married a short time ago. Three weeks after the wedding, her husband ordered her to prepare the mattress in his room. To her great chagrin she saw her husband come home with a courtesan with whom he spent the night while my poor friend remained sorrowfully outside. From that evening she lived in terror of seeing the man she had married for love return home with other favourites, and be compelled to prepare his bed for his unlawful loves.”

“Poor Madame Thousand-Delights!”

The Yokohama lady sighed as I did. But I noticed in her look a kind of anticipatory fear. She seemed to be far from sure that she might not be obliged to imitate, one day, the resignation of Madame Thousand-Delights.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN THE GEISHAS SMILE . . .

Tokio

EVERYONE who has visited Japan expects to be asked, on his return, the inevitable question, a question which always brings a smile to the face of the questioned:

“ And the geishas? ”

One can readily believe that that national institution, the geishas, greatly intrigues Europeans who are not familiar with the customs of the country. To speak the truth, one hears in the West of terrible enormities with regard to geishas. Some accounts are so fantastic that they astound every Japanese. I remember a story about geishas which appeared in a Parisian magazine, illustrated by an artist who, in order to give a little piquancy to the picture, represented a geisha uncovered down to her hips! It was a crime of *lèse vérité*.

Women in the Far East, Chinese and

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Japanese, are, on the contrary, the most modest it is possible to imagine. Never, in public, can one see a Chinese or Japanese in a low dress like a Western woman. They would blush to the roots of the lashes of their oblique eyes at the mere thought of exposing all that a white woman shows so liberally to the gaze of her admirers. The Chinese woman, until quite recently, wore long sleeves entirely covering her arms, without mentioning the high collar which hides her neck up to her ears. For some time at Shanghai and Peking women have worn sleeves cut short above the elbow. This is a piece of daring for which the immodest Europeans are responsible. In this way they have influenced the fashions of Madame Who-Contains-Springtime.

It is the same in Japan. The kimono is closed from the neck to the heels. It is forbidden to show anything but the head, the hands and the feet. The absolutely seemly behaviour of the geishas—that so many people mistake for professional prostitutes—at once strikes the foreign visitor. If you kiss the hand of a geisha and casually stroke her velvety fore-arm, she quickly withdraws her

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hand with a laugh to hide her surprise and confusion. She is really shocked. Note, by the way, that in all Japanese hotels, you will meet in the warm bath men and women naked who bathe without costumes and find it perfectly natural.

I put up, one day in Atami, a watering place on the Pacific coast, at a purely Japanese hotel not frequented by Western people. On awaking, my friend Kimura took me to the bathing pool where women of a certain age, laughing girls, elderly men and young athletes were washing. We had made the mistake of going there dressed. Kimura was severely taken to task by an old gentleman who asked him if the bathing pool had become a zoological garden for foreign tourists.

The Japanese was right. Kimura whispered in my ear:

“ This august old gentleman has just treated me as if I were an outcast. . . . It would, in fact, be better for us to . . . er . . . to put ourselves . . . how do you call it in your language . . . on the altogether, I think.”

“ You mean: in the altogether.”

“ Quite so.”

WHEN THE GEISHAS SMILE . . .

Without further ado, Kimura handed me over to a pretty young girl of about fifteen, dressed in a violet kimono, who, in a special corner reserved for the purpose, stripped off my clothes in a twinkling, and soaped me with the energy of a washerwoman busily pounding and kneading household linen. Kimura and myself soon found ourselves, like Adam before the fall, ready to plunge into the pool of hot water where we were welcomed, this time without any protestations. We were in regulation attire.

The crusty old gentleman, who had called my friend a "sickly cormorant," stood aside in the most friendly manner to make room for him to souse himself, and in a few minutes we were all excellent friends.

This matter of Japanese modesty had other surprises in store for us. A lady of the diplomatic corps, whose word I could not possibly doubt, told me, one evening in July last, that she was walking in the middle of the day through the Hibya Park. It was terribly warm. The people of Tokio were overpowered by the heat wave. To her great amazement, she met, walking under the trees in the park,

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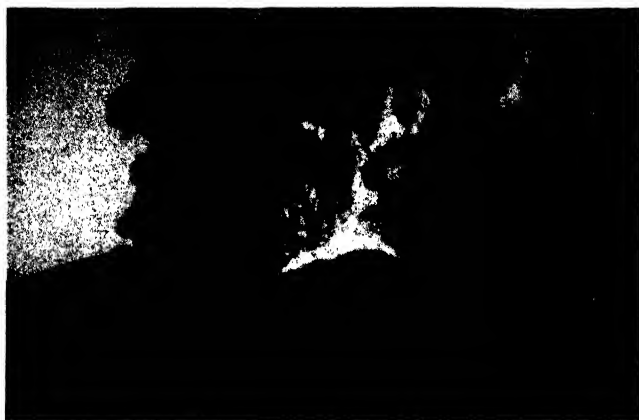
an elderly Japanese dressed simply in a straw hat, and carrying his pair of white pants, carefully folded, on his left arm. The appearance of this honourable gentleman, as he strolled along, did not shock anybody. And this proves that modesty, like love, knows no law.

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The exact meaning of the word *geisha* is: an accomplished person. It is quite natural, in a country where ordinary women do not go into society and do not attend dinner parties, that the gaiety of these private functions is entrusted to specialists.

Ages ago, in the Nara period, eight centuries before Christ, there were the *asobimes*, who were probably the ancestors of the modern geishas. One says, probably, because it cannot be definitely stated. These *asobimes* were bohemians who wandered from town to town like troubadours in the Middle Ages. Their business was to entertain by their conversation, their songs and their affability, provincial officials and persons of high rank.

Other Japanese historians attribute the origin of geishas to the *shirabyoshi*, the dancers and



MOUNT ASO IN ERUPTION



M. MAURICE DEKOBRA, THE AUTHOR, (CENTRE),
AT THE CRATER OF MIHARA YAMA

WHEN THE GEISHAS SMILE . . .

professional singers who were popular in Kyoto and Kamakura at the beginning of the twelfth century. They kept company with men during the festivals, in short, played the part of the geishas of to-day. It is said that they were still more cultivated and refined. They had so much wit and intelligence that in company with their guests they improvised poems or songs on a given air. And this draws one's attention to the fact that the singers in Montmartre and Berlin have originated nothing new.

These *shirabyoshi* women were dressed as men and carried a sword in a silver scabbard. That is why the favourite dance, *Otoko Mai*, means—the dance of the man.

At that time one of the most celebrated composers of music for the *shirabyoshi* was Monamoto-no-Mitsuyuki. He was the governor of the province of Kawachi. It is said that his talent was so great as a poet and improviser that when he was condemned to be beheaded for having taken part in the civil war in Shokyu he escaped death by inventing, at the last moment, his finest poem. The executioners who were to cut off his head were so overcome by the beauty of the verse that

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they put down their swords to listen to him. Later, he was pardoned, for, in this country, where poetry was venerated, it was looked upon as an inexpiable crime to put to death a man whom nature had endowed so highly.

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At Kyoto, I had time to admire, in their traditional costume, the courtesans of the Shimabara Quarter; this reserved quarter lies to south-west of the old capital. I was told, during the tea hour, of the exploits of the famous ancestors of these ladies of pleasure.

In the days of the Emperor Go-Toba, two *shirabyoshi* had become very celebrated. They were Giwo and Gijo, women of great beauty and experts in the art of the dance.

One day, as they were praying for the health of their mother, Kujomori, the head of the Taira clan noticed them. He immediately ordered one of his courtesans to seize one of them. The beautiful Giwo was housed at the palace with her mother and sister. Her happiness was short-lived. Another *shirabyoshi*, Hotoké by name, seemed to be still more beautiful in the eyes of the famous warrior.

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She attracted him. Then, full of affection for his new favourite, he cast aside poor Giwo. On the evening when she was tearfully leaving the palace with her mother and sister, Hotoké, the new favourite, deeply moved by Giwo's grief came to console her and to prove her sincerity, there and then cut off her own black hair, vowing that she would become a Buddhist nun. Giwo and she, influenced by religious fervour, ended their lives together in a convent.

This edifying story ought to be impressed on the minds of all women who, willingly or unwillingly, break another woman's heart by snatching away the man they love.

When one wanders at night in the old quarter of Kyoto, in those streets with their little, low, wooden, age-worn houses and one is anxious to know their history and the ways and customs of their inhabitants it is necessary to have a guide like Monsieur Georges Bonmarchand, whose works on Japanese literature are universally appreciated. Our erudite interpreter to the French Embassy has, in truth, translated with verve and accuracy *La Vie d'une Amie de la Volupté*, a novel of manners published in 1636, which gives us a very close

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and exact idea of what used to happen in a house of pleasure in the Jokio era.

While we were taking green tea in a geisha-house, I listened with great interest to my fellow countryman, who, for twenty-five years has studied Japanese life in all its aspects. A pretty little girl of barely twelve years of age, who was sitting near our *hibachi* poking the live cinders, listened, with astonishment at our incomprehensible language.

There are, in modern geisha-houses as at the Comédie Française, apart from the geisha proper, about six dozen *hangyokus* or assistants; these are the young hopefuls, anxious to learn the art of pleasing, who later will become full fledged geishas.

As he pointed out a little girl of twelve years of age, a regular little doll in a kimono, with a white porcelain face and large soft black eyes, Georges Bonmarchand explained to me:

“ This institution is multisecular. From before the days of the courtesan whose life I have translated, there were at Kyoto *kamuros*, little girls of from eight to thirteen years of age. They waited upon the courtesans of

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high standing, the *tayous*, and followed them in the street acting as aides-de-camp—or shall I dare to say aides-de-lit. *Kamuros* became attached to a courtesan who was like a sister, and they took the name of *Hane joro* (*Hane* means elder sister and *joro* courtesan). During the time of this kind of noviciate they learnt the indispensable arts: conversation, songs and dancing. When they became nubile they were exhibited, under the name of *Shinzo*, in company with their elder sister who had paid the living expenses.”

“These girls were not jealous of their initiatresses?”

“Jealous—no. Grateful—yes. Besides one can cure jealousy here by making a pilgrimage to the Uji bridge on the road from Kyoto to the province of Yamato. Near the bridge, there is a temple erected to Princess Uji who, in days gone by, drowned herself in the river, owing to jealousy. This unfortunate girl has become the patroness of jealous women, who hope, by worshipping at her temple, to cure themselves of the interior heart-burning that is devouring them.”

Our conversation was interrupted by the

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dialogue of two geishas, who were whispering behind the paper partition. My companion listened and smiled. He continued:

“ It is a pity that you do not understand Japanese, because you would have learned that the young woman in the pink kimono whose dancing you admired just now has as a friend a sweetheart who respects her excessively. I say excessively in its etymological sense . . . with excess! Mademoiselle Heart-Breaker wishing less respect in his conversation and more daring in his attitude to her has decided to have recourse to *Jio Gwan*.”

“ What is *Jio Gwan* ? ”

“ Aphrodisiac pills made from the root of the plant *jio*, imported from China. It is used in these pills. It quickens the circulation of the blood and stimulates the sexual passions. If I have understood correctly Mademoiselle Heart-Breaker intends to give the drug to her friend on the evening of the *Wakana no sekku*, that is to say the festival of the first spring plants. For you know our chief popular festivals here correspond to the seventh day of the first month, the third day of the third month, the fifth day of the seventh month

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and the ninth day of the ninth month. The second is the *Momo no sekku* or the festival of peach blossoms. It is celebrated in honour of young girls by exhibiting dolls and bouquets of flowers. The third is the *Shobu no sekku*, the festival of the irises which is devoted to boys. On this day young warriors parade. But instead of arms and weapons they carry an oriflamme representing a carp on a long pole, the symbol of muscular energy! The fourth is the *Tanabata*. It is a festival of Chinese origin which celebrates the meeting of the cowherd and the spinner on the bridge thrown by the crows across the milky way. And last of all, the fifth is the *Kiku no sekku*. It is the chrysanthemum festival. In the olden days it was celebrated in the Imperial Palace where a banquet was given in the course of which poems were composed and chrysanthemum wine was drunk."

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Let us repeat once more this irrefutable fact. Geishas are not prostitutes. The profession of the geisha, the accomplished companion at banquets and festive occasions is

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neither contemptible nor wrong. One can quote instances at Tokio of geishas long ago who became princesses or marchionesses and have, owing to their grace and virtue, been accorded armorial bearings.

There are many classes of geishas. In order to be a geisha of the first class at Tokio a girl must be, in the first place, pretty. What does it matter whether she knows how to play the *samisen*, that Japanese guitar upon which she accompanies herself so charmingly. At Kyoto they are more exacting. Beauty does not play a principal role. She has to be expert in dancing and singing. However, whether it be at Tokio, Kyoto or Osaka the geisha is thoroughly conversant with masculine psychology. In fact few women in the world understand men's mentality so well. They read their thoughts and their wishes, and know the subjects of conversation that interest them.

But don't imagine that the life of a geisha of the first class, even those who are highly paid for their talents, is a bed of roses. Their existence is a tiring one. Every day she must make up like an actress who is perpetually

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performing. The preparation of their coiffure, with its rolls of oiled hair, takes two hours. They must not only make themselves agreeable to the visitors at the geisha-house—naturally within the limits of decency—but must also maintain their popularity with the lady patrons who engage them for dinners; with the servants, and with their assistants who help them and are their confidantes and who keep them informed regarding the rank of their visitors.

They must endure, with a smile, the rivalry of other geishas of their class; restrain without killing the excessive ardour of a client who, having drunk too much *saké*, thinks he is at the Yoshiwara, the quarter set apart for real courtesans.

During many dinners at geisha-houses in the *Shimbashi* quarter at Tokio, I had plenty of opportunities of noticing the skill of these ladies. The first time one is present at one of these receptions, one is immediately attracted by the charm of the surroundings. The reception room is scrupulously clean. Twenty-five little low tables are arranged in horse-shoe shape on *tatamis*—rugs—on the floor. In

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front of each table a cushion is placed to squat upon, and a rest for the left arm. Between each guest, in winter, stands an *hibashi*, a square brazier filled with live coals upon which are several pieces of wood that are nearly burnt away.

Everybody sits on the floor. The wooden panels slide back silently and one by one the ladies come into the room. A bevy of dark and smiling beauties, powdered white, dressed in richly embroidered kimonos, and girdled with handsome *obis*. They come in under the harsh, unshaded electric light. They bow down to the company. You have hardly had time to accustom your eyes to the glistening colours and embroideries before a ravishing young lady of twenty years kneels in front of your table and smiles at you without being excessively familiar. Already, she is pouring *saké* into your little bowl, lighting your cigarette, arranging your chop-sticks and making herself useful. The servants, who are dressed in less handsome kimonos, bring in the dinner. Conversation grows more animated. By the middle of the meal the ice is broken. You now know the name of your little companion.

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Miss Playful-Dragon, Miss Sweet-Scented-Hill or Miss Spring-Time. At Kyoto I had the pleasure of meeting, at a courtesan's house, Miss Winged-Kimono (*Hagoromo Tayou*) and Miss Cloud-lady (*Koumoi Tayou*).

It is the moment when the little playful games begin. For example, the trick of pretending to be angry and to be pleased which causes great laughter, or the game of *Yubizimo* which consists of pushing with thumb against thumb, right hand against right hand. Then there is silence suddenly because one of the geishas wishes to come in with her *samisen*.

Long ago, in the Loochoo Isles, they used to play an instrument with two strings, called the *Jabisen*. About 1569 this instrument was introduced into the district of Kyoto. A blind man of Osaka had the idea of adding another string to it and that became the *samisen*.

Dancing follows the singing and soon, to the rhythm of the Tokio *Ondo*, all the guests standing in Indian file imitate the movements of the geishas, who are highly amused at the clumsiness of the dancers.

At midnight, we leave to the great regret of these ladies. In the vestibule of the geisha-

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house, when one is putting on one's boots to go out, the geishas surround you kneeling to make their farewell salutations. Smiling, eager, affable they wave their little hands in saying good-bye. They give one the illusion that they are miserable at your departure, and that they are parting from very dear friends. And although one is not taken in by this exquisite piece of politeness, it leaves a very pleasant impression on one's mind, like the scent of a flower, the after-taste of a delicious bonbon or . . . the lilt of a song.

One wonders whether the Japanese are not right, whether the geisha-house is not an excellent institution from every point of view and whether its pretty inhabitants are not the most bewitching creators of illusions.

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No one will be surprised to hear that geishas are very superstitious. They believe in all sorts of fetishes. In the room in which they live, they erect miniature altars, with little Buddhas for good luck and pray to them every morning when they awake.

A Japanese, who knew them well, for he

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had for thirty years continually visited them, told me that they were regular chatter-boxes.

“ Geishas are the most loquacious of women. You can hear them chattering hour after hour, sometimes all through the night. They are very sensitive and the least happening unchains a torrent of words. But bear in mind that they are not just idle words, there is logic and wit in their conversation. For their profession requires them to talk freely. A dinner of men surrounded by silent geishas would be as mournful as a funeral.”

“ But why don't the modern Japanese introduce their friends to their wives, daughters and sisters? A few Japanese women in 1936 are emancipated enough and grace a dinner. I remember being invited by two Japanese diplomats in China, I was welcomed in the reception-room by two exquisitely dressed ladies, who were perfectly accustomed to receive visitors. I thought that the two ladies were my hosts' wives. Not at all. The gentlemen were married, certainly, but they had sent for two geishas to keep us company. And even better than that. . . . Being entertained in

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the suburbs of Yokohama by a very good Japanese friend, a married man and the father of a family, we were surprised to see three geishas arrive at the luxurious villa where his wife and his daughter did the honours of the house. The three geishas helped these ladies to wait on us during dinner."

"This is according to tradition. . . . As a rule Japanese women of good birth are excessively modest and retiring owing to their upbringing; and their sequestration in the family mansion. The geisha, on the contrary, has been educated, if one may say so, to shine in the presence of men."

"But don't married women show any violent hostility to geishas?"

"Obviously, the wife who is left in her house by her husband who goes and spends his money in geisha-houses, must be envious and hate and despise these professional charmers who, sometimes, filch from them the love of their husbands. However, a well-known Japanese financier declared one day: 'If we were to suppress the geishas it would be necessary to re-invent them. For they act as a stimulant to the males. They are the tonic

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for the weak and the lash of the whip for the disheartened.' ”

“ How do you recruit the geishas? ”

“ The majority take up this career to alleviate the distress of their parents. You would find a gesture of abnegation, or an act of self-sacrifice as the reason why almost all geishas take to this life. A few have become geishas because their idle parents have seen in this profession—if their daughter is pretty—an assured income for their old age. In general the geishas are of humble origin. How many have I known, who, ten years before, were children wandering about their village, undernourished, carrying on their backs the last belongings of a family in distress. . . . Instead of succulent *sukiaki* that you have learned to enjoy since you have been with us, they were fed upon *yakiimo*, baked potato.”

“ Just as teaching makes the bear dance, according to Helvetius, long years of apprenticeship transforms the little peasant of former days into the smiling and refined geisha. I have visited their schools at Kyoto. The most modern is the *Shoeiko*, which contains 250 young pupils. You ought to see with what

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assiduity these future sirens work under the tuition of old retired geishas, practising the *Koto*, a horizontal harp with thirteen strings, and learning to dance, accompanied by the *samisen*."

My Japanese friend realising how sympathetic I was towards the customs of his country, exclaimed smilingly:

"I see that you are truly getting accustomed to us, and that in distinction to certain American tourists, you do not assume the outlook of a clergyman outraged by the presence of a geisha. You are right too, for as I have lived in Europe and America, I can give you *quid pro quo* ; eye for an eye ; yen for a dollar, and I will prove to you that the gold-diggers of Chicago cannot reproach our *samisen* players."

"But, to return to our subject, tell me upon what does the success of a geisha depend?"

"Upon the choice of the *geishaya* where she makes her *début*. A clever geisha, well equipped, refined, intelligent and pretty is assured of success if she makes her first appearance in a geisha-house frequented by men of position, rich and influential. Further,



FUJI YAMA—CHERRY BLOSSOMS IN THE FOREGROUND

if the young geisha is noticed on her first appearance by an astute matron, she will help her to make a fortune, for it will be to her advantage. If it interests you, I may tell you that the official recorders of night life have classified the geishas into five categories. First, the *jimae*; these are the geishas who live at home and work without any intermediary. The *tanagari*, or the geishas who pay for their maintenance but nevertheless live in a geisha-house. The *waké*, or the geishas who find their own dresses, are fed by the matron of the geisha-house, and share half their earnings with her. The *shichisan*, who live like the *waké*, but wear clothes lent to them by the house. In their cases their earnings are divided in the ratio of seven to three. And last of all, the *marugakaé*, or the geishas who engage for a certain period in exchange for a definite sum payable in advance. All the expenses are put down to the geisha-house, but all the receipts go to the matron."

"What are the average earnings of a geisha of the first class?"

"A geisha of the first class, at Tokio, Osaka or at Kyoto can make a thousand yen a month,

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that is to say about five thousand francs. In addition to that they are generally looked after by a special friend, who may also give them a further five thousand francs, in addition to paying their small dress expenses, outings, theatre expenses, etc. . . . You will see that it is not within the reach of all purses to support a geisha of the first class. The geishas of Tokio are the most extravagant. They do not spare any expense as regards their kimonos and their obis, those large sashes of embroidered silk which keep their clothes fastened at the waist. I hope you have been able to verify by sight how complicated is the dress of a Japanese lady. For winter she wears as many as six or seven kimonos, one over the other, not to mention little pink woollen panties and white socks, an *obi shin*, which is a tortoiseshell plaque, a plate pressing the stomach and preventing the obi from getting into folds at the waist. Then, one must not forget the *otaiko*, a kind of bustle like the Western fashion of 1890, nor the large clip which holds the knot at the back of the obi under the artistically tied bow. And I may mention that a handsome kimono costs easily

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three or four hundred yen, that is about 1,500 or 2,000 francs."

"Excuse me, I thought the knowing geishas usually go to the obi market where they find a wide and abundant selection of ceremonial kimonos which have not been worn more than two or three times. They are practically new and only cost forty or fifty yen."

My friend laughed heartily.

"I see that one cannot hide from you the little secrets of Tokio life. As a matter of fact the obi market is a godsend to impoverished geishas. But one must remember that the life of a geisha is short. At thirty years they are almost at the end of their career. Then they marry a middle-class Japanese if, in the hey-day of their profession, that is to say between eighteen and twenty-five years old, they have not conquered a rich or highly born man. Those who do not marry become later on proprietresses or manageresses of tea-houses, and, as is always the case in life, those who have aimed too high fall into the ditch with their wings damaged. The struggle for them becomes still more difficult, and they have to bow to circumstances and

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become, I will not say dishonourable, but strenuous café waitresses. And if you will come with me to the Ginza Palace, I will show you those who, for years, wage with one another the little daily warfare which is, so far as women are concerned the conquest of man."

CHAPTER VII

MISS LITTLE-BELL, WAITRESS

TOKIO, largely rebuilt since the earthquake, is certainly the capital that has the widest avenues in the world. There is plenty of room, and the chauffeurs, taking advantage of the fact, turn the city streets into racing tracks.

Ginza is the principal business thoroughfare, with its luxury shops and huts in which, from evening to midnight, everything is sold. Ginza resembles both the rue de la Paix and the rue du Rivoli, and is crossed by numerous narrow streets where countless bars and cafés are to be found: *Salon Printemps*, *Sans Souci*, *Silver Slipper*, *Bar Bouquet*, *Romance*, *Bar Arsène Lupin*, *Bar des Trois Sœurs*, *Virgin Forest*, *Geranium*, *Rheingold*, *Circé*, *Ginza Palace*, etc.

After a short visit to the Silver Slipper, where the waitresses are dressed in European evening dress, and speak a smattering of English to the Western night revellers, we

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went to the Ginza Palace, where 200 waitresses in kimonos serve drinks in the hall.

As soon as we got there, a pretty little Japanese sat near us, and asked us what we would like to drink. Her name was Suzuko San, *Miss Little-Bell*.

She ceremoniously handed me her card, a cream-laid calling card, with her number—144, her name, Suzuko, and the following unexpected sentence underneath:

Don't forget me, dear.

On the other side of the card was the following:

I shall esteem it a great favour if I may serve you the next time you come here.

The faithful customer, who wishes to talk with her again, and perhaps push his flirtation with Miss Little-Bell a little further, comes the next day and asks in the vestibule for Miss 144. She cuts short her conversation with another habitué and, tripping lightly on her *zori*, comes to her serious client.

Ten years ago, in Tokio, and in Japan generally, these friendly little waitresses, who

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have arisen, fresh little flowers in innumerable little bars in the rebuilt capital, were unknown. By 1933, there were many thousands of them in Tokio. At Isezaki, the Police Headquarters at Yokohama, they told me that there were 780 waitresses, whose names are on the police registers.

And, as the statistical authorities never shirk their duties, above all in Japan, I learnt that 470 waitresses were enrolled so as to be able to help their families in misery, out of the tips they received every evening. One pleasant and pretty girl made as much as eighty yen in tips (400 francs), a large sum in the budget of a Japanese workman.

The 780 waitresses mentioned above are distributed among 225 cafés, eighty-eight bars and fifty tea-rooms; 200 of the little Japanese girls employed in these establishments are between fifteen and twenty years of age. A curious fact, and one which proves once more how much feminine youth is appreciated, is that there are only twenty waitresses whose ages are more than thirty.

To what cause can one attribute this innovation in Japan which, curiously enough,

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corresponds to the appearance of Chinese taxi-girls in large towns such as Hong-Kong, Shanghai and Tientsin? A well-informed person at Yokohama explained the problem:

“Half the waitresses in cafés in Japan work to provide help for their families. Some to allow their young brothers and sisters to complete their education, others to help their lovers to complete their studies at the University.”

I called to mind these facts as I watched Miss Little-Bell, who smiled at us so sweetly, and showed us, obviously concealed in the folds of her kimono, a little locket undoubtedly containing the photograph of the student of her heart.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION

Kyoto

As everybody knows the recognised religion of Japan is based, as in China, on ancestor worship. A form of worship many thousands of years old, the real backbone of Nippon creeds. It is through ancestor worship that one treads the path of the gods, crystallized in the word Shinto; which one must not confuse with Butsido or the way of Buddha.

Shintoism is trismegistus in the sense that it spreads to three planes: Ancestry of the family, ancestry of the clan, and lastly, Imperial ancestry, symbolized by the Emperor. The Lares and Manes of our Latin ancestors are the Western cousins of the Japanese ancestors. The Roman poet advised his fellow citizens to look upon men who have passed over as divine spirits.

The Shintoists also accord to their dead superhuman power. Therefore the faithful

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must honour their dead, because their happiness depends on the way in which they treat them. Neglect your ancestor and he will avenge himself. Hence the *mitamaya* or the august abode of the spirits in every Japanese household. Hence the prayers, recited each day, before the tombstones of the ancestors.

Shintoism did not appear to leave room for another cult. However, in the sixth century of our era, Buddhism came from India, crossing China and Korea, and forced its way into Japan. It would need volumes to describe the slow penetration into the Japanese mind of Buddhism, which, on the one hand, spread the thirst for learning and intellectual culture, but, on the other hand, began to threaten ancestor worship. It was a task indeed for the proselytes of Buddhism to reconcile the doctrines of successive reincarnations, to the convictions of the worshippers of the dead father and grandfather. Logically it should appear useless to carry offerings to the resuscitated dead. But the opportunist Bonzes, like many representatives of religions on this earth, taught, in order to satisfy their neophytes, that the dead are not resuscitated at

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once after their passing, but wait for a period of about a century. This term of probation, before their re-incarnation, is, in short, a form of politeness on the part of the defuncts who do not wish to upset the deep-rooted beliefs of their descendants. However that may be, Buddhism has had a good influence on Japanese manners. It brought with it a very high code of honour and a taste for aestheticism of which we still find traces in modern Japan.

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Although forbidden in 1871, Buddhism still has followers in Japan—numerous followers and temples. I had the good fortune to become acquainted with one of the most distinguished Bonzes, a man who spoke excellent Chinese and English, read French and is engaged on a remarkable commentary on the text of the *Gautama*.

It was at Kyoto, the old capital, the centre of Buddhism, the most picturesque city of all, where there are neither sky-scrapers as at Tokio, nor factories as at Osaka. A town which appeals to you at once, a town which transports you into the real atmosphere of old

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Japan with its little wooden houses, parts of it have not changed for ten centuries. Its courtesans still wear the ancient dress, and use candle light in their houses, which are full of reminiscences of past debauches.

In the delightful garden of the Golden Pavilion of Kinkaku Ji, a relic of the time of Ashikaza, a garden as dainty as a piece of lace made of foliage, a veritable park in miniature, we spent an afternoon discussing the most important questions of the day. How strong is the Western opposition to the culture of the Far East. We were sitting under a giant camellia tree that had been planted by the Emperor Gomizuno:

“Honourable Mr. Azuma,” I said, “you are a recognized authority, so your opinion would help me greatly to elucidate the reason of the conflict that is taking place between East and West. . . . Or, if you prefer it, between Asia and Europe.”

“With pleasure, Mr. Honourable Writer. And if you will in your good nature, point out to what extent you wish the field of discussion to go (for it is as wide as the ocean) that will make it much simpler for me.”

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“ I will try and keep it within limits. You are aware that Western civilization, especially since 1914, is in a state of flux. It has awakened, after a terrible nightmare, during which Science, that unchained demon, has maltreated and tortured her, after having flattered and spoilt her.”

The bonze shook his head, and without looking at me, his eyes fixed on a tiny pine tree about six inches high, murmured:

“ I know . . . I know. . . . Your science is an executioner who makes his victims drunk with sparkling wine before he poisons them.”

“ That is absolutely true. Not only is science comparable to a hand grenade ready to explode in the hands of a humanity too young to control it, but it assures the triumph of materialism, of which it is the trump card. It brings about social upheaval and anxiety as to the future which threatens the very foundations of Western civilization. It is a terrible prospect that a civilization which, in less than half a century, has discovered steam, electricity, aviation, the radio-activity of Hertzian waves, the atom and the electron has not, on the moral plane, progressed an

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inch. There is a terrible difference between the man of the Twentieth century, whose brain works at 600 kilometres an hour while his heart—that is to say, his emotional life—dawdles along in the quagmires of his primitive ancestors. This over-educated humanity finds that knowledge, which ought to lead to peace and harmony, brings, on the contrary, unrest and anxiety. The result is that certain philosophers such as Keyserling, Romain Rolland and Spengler, to mention only a few, offer to the Sozial-Neurasthénie of the West their panacea, which comes from the East.”

“ There is nothing surprising to us in the restlessness of your European people. Civilizations are like nervous women, who have their vapours. Civilizations also suffer from nerves. If you study the history of Japan, you will see the crises through which Shintoism and Buddhism have passed. Your Jesuits have tried to bring trouble to our faithful ones. François Xavier, one of your saints, landed at Kagoshima in 1549, of your era, and thirty years later the Jesuits had 200 churches in Japan. The arrival of the Franciscans in 1591

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION brought about a certain jealousy between the two Christian churches. The Emperor Hideyoshi in order to get them to agree, had six Franciscans and three Jesuits crucified in Nagasaki. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Jesuits, Dominicans and Franciscans had two million disciples in Japan. One saw *daimios*, recently converted, destroying Buddhist temples and killing bonzes. The intolerance of the Jesuits increased to such an extent that Christianity became a national peril. The Emperor Iyeyasu, although patient and forbearing, found that Jesuit Christianity had become a political danger, and that the social fabric of the country was threatened. These foreign devils, like ants, were attacking the foundations of Japan. It took a century to wipe out this Western religion."

"You still, however, have many Christian missions in Japan?"

"Yes, but they have very little influence, because they always want to attack ancestor worship."

"The Buddhist missions from India have succeeded where intolerance, intrigues and the persecutions of Jesuits have failed. This brings

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us to the first stage in our discussion. You are no doubt aware that since the seventeenth century, there has been continual moral warfare between East and West. Well, we Europeans are witnessing another struggle between East and West. A difference of ideas, encouraged naturally by Bolshevist theorists whose sympathies are most certainly not with the 'pampered West'."

"Russia is a mongrel product, the result of incest between Europe and Asia."

"As was to be expected, writers on Greek and Latin culture are alarmed at this wave of Orientalism, and have taken up the cudgels on behalf of the West."

"It would certainly need a very skilful advocate before a Supreme Council."

"Have you come across *Le Défense de l'Occident* by Henri Massis?"

"No."

This very distinguished writer defends European civilization with a zeal which is permeated by ardent Catholicism. It is, in truth, difficult to expect an impartial opinion of the struggle apart from the philosopher who writes: "God has assigned to Europe



MR. CHIEZO KATAOKA AND
MISS ISUZA YAMADA, FILM STARS



MISS RANKO HANAI, FILM STAR

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION
the rôle of gradually spreading over the earth
the advantages of Christian civilization."

The Honourable Mr. Azuma looked at me quizzically and, in his soft voice, with an almost apologetical air for interrupting me, remarked:

"Has your God assigned to Christians the task of converting us with twelve inch guns, torpedoes, machine guns and gas bombs? . . ."

"But that is another story. Those who defend the West, like Monsieur Henri Massis, decry the false teaching of those who disseminate to a degenerate Europe, greedy for mystery, 'spurious Buddhism and distorted Hinduism from Asia.' And they include, among others, Tagore, Gandhi, Annie Besant and Okakura."

"You are talking to me of spurious Buddhism. But your compatriots share in this trickery. Why put on one side spurious Buddhism, and on the other pan-Christianity. Asiatic religions have their schisms, like yours. And it is absolutely unfair to blame the Hindu, Chinese and Japanese schools of religion when Christians have, in America alone, 161 sects

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in opposition to one another; not to mention older sects, which include the Latter Day Saints, the Adventists, the Unitarians, the Memonites, the Disciples of Christ, the Friends, the Baptists, etc., etc. . . . The Western people must not, under the pretext of defending their civilization, condemn a spurious form of Buddhism, as it is taught by bogus apostles. It seems to me that, even for a man brought up to Western science, Buddhism, a world-famous philosophy, ought not to be without its appeal, for there is a bond of sympathy between it and Monism."

"You cannot fail to see a certain relationship between Buddhism and evolution?"

"Oh, no."

"It is a fact that the latest theories on the unity of the universe, and matter reduced to successive variations of waves, seem to be the scientific explanation of the concepts of Buddha."

"The Englishman, Herbert Spencer, says that the proof of reality is permanence. We live in a world where there is no permanence. Hence the absence of all reality. So Monism

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION
and Buddhism come to the syllogism—there is only one form of reality: the absolute.”

“Wait a moment, Honourable Mr. Azuma. Don’t speak of the reality of the absolute until we can grasp it. For Herbert Spencer, whom you rightly quote apropos of your theory, says that we are not able to grasp reality so long as our conscience exists. Well, our conscience, like the spark from the striking of two pieces of flint, is born from striking together the subject with the object.”

“You have interrupted me too soon, Honourable Mr. Writer. I did not say that the absolute was perceptible by our conscience, *but on the contrary it is beyond it*. Buddhist philosophy will reply to you: annihilate your conscience and the absolute becomes a reality. It is Nirvana or the end of the Personal.”

“That may be so. But can you realise the absolute if there is no longer any conscience?”

“If you argue in that way, you are the slave of a very limited individualism. . . . You are like a wrestler who wants to throw his adversary with his hands and feet tied. . . .

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Try and free yourself from the individual. May I not remind you, with all deference, that we are all of us only part of an ephemeral aggregate man. There is only one eternal. That is Buddha. The material universe and all living creatures are only two forms of Karma."

"Agreed. The theory of Karma is not irreconcilable with the Personal. We know that man, being an individual limited by space, renews himself every seven years. In 1936 we have no longer any of the cells that constituted us in 1929. From a purely anatomical point of view we are no longer the same individual. And our combined mental, spiritual and emotional condition has changed. Only our imponderability remains."

"This transmigration is merely the work of Karma. It is in this respect that your modern science is more or less the confirmation of our thousands-of-years old theories. There is hardly any difference between the ideas of our old metaphysicians and those of your savants. And further, they both bring consolation to the dying. He knows that he has formerly lived millions of existences, and that he will live millions more to infinity. One

IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN PAVILION

can give a comparison which will enable the man in the street, little accustomed to philosophic hypotheses, to understand this theory: A round-about of wooden horses worked for eternity. At the death of the individual that which we call his soul leaves that horse to go to another. The phantom horsemen are the souls. The wooden horses are matter. The two are the emanations of Karma. That is to say illusions, for the only reality lies in the master of the outfit, viz. Buddha."

"Let us admit your contention. But it is nevertheless difficult, Honourable Mr. Azuma, to reconcile Western science, even when its equations touch the transcendental sphere of the absolute or of the incomprehensible, with the moral evolution of the Universe so dear to you as interpreted by the law of Buddha."

"Why? "

"Because ethics, the science of morals, is essentially anthropomorphic. When we speak of *moral* we mean that the human mind can understand. To transpose the moral to the organization of the Universe is to commit, if I may dare to say so, an abuse of spiritual power which cannot be justified.

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It is difficult for us to make clear, according to moral values, the state of the inorganic world."

"Unless there is not an inorganic world! We, we believe that the stones on the road can adore Buddha."

"Our savants have not got to that stage. But I realize that some of them, the advance guard of Physical Science, go so far as to admit that matter has life, since it has birth, it lasts and it changes. Then from that one can almost conceive a moral for atoms, it is only one step further."

"You will soon reach that point, I am sure, and you will be able to say, at last, that Asiatic Buddhism and European science are hand in hand."

On this prediction, the Honourable Bonze picked up a pine cone that had fallen at his feet and fondled it in silence as if a miraculous fruit had fallen from the Tree of Knowledge.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUICIDE'S ISLE

The Isle of Oshima

One day, in a bar in Tokio, I happened to meet several Japanese friends, and we began discussing the question of suicide.

"It is a cowardly thing!" someone exclaimed. "A man who is afraid to live and cannot face the difficulties of life is a poltroon."

The name of the gentleman who made this remark was Mr. Eternal Popular.

"It is an act of supreme courage," said another. "To go willingly to one's death with sang-froid, without any hesitation proves, on the contrary, that he is *not* a coward."

This gentleman's name was Mr. National Road.

"I don't know which of you is right," said a third, "but according to the statistics issued by the Police of the Isle of Oshima, 831 people had either the courage or the cowardice to

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throw themselves into the crater of Mount Mihara during the year 1933."

The figure astonished me. What could be the fatal attraction of this volcano, which drew so many people to acts of desperation?

My excellent friend Ki Kimura offered to take me to the mountain on condition that I promised not to drag him into the crater along with myself.

"Don't be alarmed, my dear friend," I said. "And to show good faith we will take two return tickets when we get on to the boat."

The next evening, at ten o'clock, we went on board a small steamer and after a smooth passage of six hours, with the sea like a sheet of glass, we reached the rocky coast of the Isle of Oshima. A number of passengers of both sexes landed.

Kimura whispered in my ear:

"Calculating that 831 persons killed themselves in the volcano in a year, that works out at an average of two and quarter people a day. Perhaps there are some among these tourists."

Moved by his remark, I looked at my neighbours, trying to discover from their

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expressions, gay and grave, whether they had homicidal tendencies. I drew Kimura's attention to a man who seemed to be discontented and complaining about something to his companion.

"Don't you think that man seems to be a little tired of life and is trying to persuade his lady friend that death is the only way out?"

My companion burst out laughing.

"Ha! Ha! . . . Evidently you don't understand Japanese! He is merely blaming his wife because she has forgotten to bring her Kodak with her!"

.

Two hours later, after having had a cup of green tea at the hotel to warm us, the dawn broke and the villagers awoke from sleep. Two horses were ready to take us up the mountain. Kimura, with the agility of a circus acrobat and the nimbleness of a Cossack, sprang on to his horse while four men, deputed to hoist the foreigner on to his, came up to me with two chairs and ropes. They were astonished to see me also get on to my animal with the suppleness of an old monkey mounting

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a trained stag. But I explained that having served in a cavalry regiment during the war I know that one does not mount a horse with a lift.

The Isle of Oshima is the paradise of red camellias. The camellias give off a scented oil, a tonic for the hair, which all the young girls of the island use. And Oshima is also noted for the beauty of its inhabitants. While, of the sea shore, it is said:

“The isle of Oshima does not need light-houses. The sailors have the bright eyes of young girls to guide them.”

As the sun rose it lit up the landscape with a clear soft light and the opposite coast appeared in all its splendour. My first surprise, as we ascended the rocky path, was to come across a police warning-notice couched in these terms:

In order not to make the duties of the Authorities impossible you are advised not to accompany strangers. Be careful not to go with them to the volcano.

Kimura explained its meaning:

“It means to say that if you meet a solitary tourist you should not get into conversation

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with him or her. Because people who go alone up to Mihara Yama are suspect. One should keep an eye on them if they are not members of a party."

On reaching a height of 900 feet we halted to admire the majestic white outline of Fuji Yama, which stood out on the other side of the sea in the serene blue of a cloudless sky. It was an unforgettable sight and I understood more fully than ever the adoration of the Japanese for their celebrated peak, which symbolizes, at the same time, their noblest traditions and their hopes. As I turned round I noticed a young girl of about eighteen to twenty sitting in front of the cabin, her eyes very red. I drew Kimura's attention to her. He also seemed anxious about her, so he politely asked her the reason for her grief and then translated for me her reply:

"She is in despair!"

"Poor child!" I replied. . . . "An affair of the heart, no doubt."

Kimura talked for some time to her. I anxiously waited for him to tell me the sad truth. In the end he explained:

"No. . . . Not a matter of the heart. A

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bad cold in the head! She is desperate because she has not even a paper handkerchief with her to wipe her nose."

Re-assured we re-mounted our horses. We passed groups of students, tourists of both sexes who seemed happy, and without any tragic intentions. On reaching the half-way point, we went into a tea-house, where for the first time, I heard, not the song of the sirens, but the *Oshima Bushi*.

Watasha Oshima Goshinka sodachi
Muneni taku hi wa kieyasenu. . . .

This very homesick song had affected two young girls, Miyeko San and Masako San, on November 12th, 1932. The former committed suicide a little later—or at any rate it is thought so, for she has never been seen since. And I was told the sad story of Miyeko Matsumoto San who threw herself into the crater on February 12th, 1933. She also was accompanied by Masako Tamita San, whom destiny seems to have designed to conduct desperate young girls to their death.

I was pondering over these sad examples when my friend pointed out a wooden panel

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on which was written in large Japanese characters:

Suicide is an unpardonable sin! Come therefore to confess to me, for I am both a merchant in Rice and a Christian. I can give you good advice.

Unfortunately I had not time to make the acquaintance of the author of the notice, and I greatly regret it. I should have complimented him immediately upon:

- 1st. His noble Christian sentiments.
- 2nd. His keen modern business sense.

For, to take advantage of the confession of a desperate person who wishes to die, and to persuade him at the same time that life has some good in it and that he can buy at a reasonable price a pound of rice, is to mix with charming aplomb the sublime and the practical, the beauty of virtue and the triumph of publicity.

We continued our ascent. We were walking on the rocky volcanic ground, for we had left our horses at the tea house. Kimura suddenly made a sign to me and pointed out in front

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of us, a young woman in a kimono with the *zori* trailing on the rocks. She was walking with unusual haste.

"This time," he said, "I think that this tourist is suspect."

"May be so, but don't forget the warning of the public notice down below . . . don't let a solitary visitor join you!"

"Quite so. But if this young woman has ideas of suicide, don't you think that we two could manage to dissuade her?"

"Perhaps you are right, Kimura. . . . Speak to her."

My friend overtook her and spoke to her politely. I caught sight of her and saw that she was pretty. That her dark, dreamy eyes had a tender look in them and that she smiled without geniality, merely out of courtesy, like someone simulating gaiety. My friend and she continued to talk for quite a long time. . . . At length he told me the gist of the conversation.

"I was right. . . . She is very unhappy, is anxious to end her life. . . . I am sure she is in earnest and wants to kill herself."

"Disappointed in love?"

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"Of course. She has left Tokio unknown to her relatives and friends, and has decided to throw herself this evening into the crater."

"Oh! But how dreadful . . . so young! And yet she wants to die."

"She is twenty."

"Really. Twenty years of age, it is too soon or too late to leap into the unknown! We must stop her from doing it."

"She takes no notice of what I say to her. She is determined."

"Listen to me. This young girl is probably impressionable. Introduce me to her, as a Hindu fakir, Ko-ba-la San, it is the name of a serpent. Well, the serpent is the symbol of wisdom and knowledge of the future."

Kimura followed my suggestion.

I found that the young woman's name was Ochiyo San.

"What does her name mean?"

"It means Miss Ten Thousand Years or Miss Eternity. . . ."

"Then, ask her why with a name like that, she wishes to die so soon!"

Kimura translated the question. The young woman with a fatalistic gesture replied:

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"I shall finish my 9,980 years living in a better world."

I stared at her, my hands at the height of her eyes and said to her like a hypnotist who wishes to influence his subject:

"You will be tortured for the next 9,980 years, if you commit suicide. While the remainder of your 10,000 years will be peaceful and happy if you give up your wicked intention."

She did not seem to be convinced and began to walk away. I made a sign to Kimura not to lose sight of her. We were a long way from the crater, so we still had time to persuade her.

At last we reached a wooden door with a notice on it that Kimura translated for me as follows:

If you see anyone who wants to kill himself please warn the police. It is important.

"Singular notice," I said. "Before warning the police it seems to me it would be more important to hurry and catch hold of the tail of the kimono of a person who threatens to throw herself into the void. . . . If we obeyed the injunction, we should leave this young



M. MAURICE DEKOBRA, THE AUTHOR, WITH A GROUP OF FILM STARS
AT A STUDIO IN KYOTO

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girl, in order to go to the police station to inform against a suspect. When we got back, she would probably already be in the burning lava."

"You are right! We will keep track of her!"

We had to run over some rocky ground, for, taking advantage of our inattention, the young love-sick maiden had gone on ahead. We caught her up again. Kimura, to whom I had explained the plan, stopped her to speak to her and said something like this:

"You are broken-hearted, Ochiyo San. You say you wish to kill yourself because your young lover, the student Hideyo Takata, has not written to you for a month and you think he no longer cares for you! Why, before you die, do you not consult as a last resource Te-Ko-ba-la San, the Indian Fakir that I introduced to you?"

"Can he foretell the future?"

"More than that! He has power to influence future events. If I were in your place I should put some questions to him and I should ask him to help you to win back your lover."

I don't know exactly what arguments he

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used to convince Ochiyo San, but five minutes later they came up to me. I immediately assumed the meditative air of a fakir recently arrived from Benares. Fortunately, I had not to lie naked on a bed of broken bottles nor on a board covered with sharp spikes. Kimura, with the gravity of a chamberlain presenting an Ambassador to a King, said:

“ Friend . . . Ochiyo San wishes to know whether her future will be rosy or dark.”

The young girl bowed. I bowed back. She was indeed very charming in her cerise kimono embroidered with ibises and swallows and her claret coloured obi. After a moment's silence I announced:

“ Rosy! . . . There is no doubt about it rosy! rosy! . . . ”

My words, spoken with great conviction, made a definite impression upon her, for she replied:

“ How do you mean, rosy? ”

“ Well, you are in love, Ochiyo San. And your love will most probably turn out very happily.”

With the point of my stick, I drew on the dry lava the initials H. T.

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Kimura whispered to her:

"Those are your friend's initials—Hideyo Takata . . . that Te-Ko-ba-la San has divined. . . . He has written them in European characters. . . ."

Ochiyo San seemed to be very surprised. Fortunately, she never suspected that Kimura had quietly told me her confessions.

Then I went on:

"Friend! Translate this to Ochiyo San! It is her foolish imagination that has made her decide to commit suicide to-day. The true facts are absolutely the opposite of what she imagines. The student, who is in love with her, has no intention of being untrue to her. Nor has he any idea of giving her up. He has been working very hard at the University. He needs some distractions. He goes out with his friends. He has been drinking a good deal of *saké*. He is ashamed of himself. To punish himself he had ceased, for a time, to see the girl he loves and has shut himself up in his room. But don't despair. Hideyo Takata will come back to her in a few days, for he is an upright man and has a loyal and honest heart."

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Kimura acted as interpreter. Ochiyo San seemed very interested in my predictions. I became hopeful. When curiosity takes possession of a woman there is no room for despair.

For ten minutes we talked to her of this Takata San, of whom we knew nothing at all. We spoke of him as if he were an old friend we had known at the University of Wazeda, whose innermost thoughts were quite familiar to us.

Ochiyo San was more and more astonished. She glanced furtively in the direction of the crater and then at us like a person who is trying to make up her mind.

I said to her at last:

“Ochiyo San, trust me. Do not carry out your decision to-day. You will find that the world will smile on you before long.”

“Perhaps! Perhaps! But—but I must see the crater.”

“Only see it?”

“I promise not to jump into it.”

There were three hundred yards to go. Escorted by us like a thief between two policemen our pretty companion stumbled over the hard rough lava. At length we

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reached the edge of the chasm. An infernal looking spectacle worthy of Dante. An imposing sight suggestive of gigantic dramas at the birth of the world in the prehistoric age of the stupendous upheavals of the crust of the earth. Sulphurous vapours made breathing difficult. To make sure, Kimara and I held tightly on to Ochiyo San each by a sleeve of her kimono. With my right hand I held the bow of her obi.

She bent forward a little and looked at us. For a moment I believed that, unfaithful to her promise, she meant to jump into the abyss. It was, however, a false alarm. She recoiled with terror. She coughed and began to weep silently, too moved to speak.

We consoled her as though she was our little sister. I foretold a marvellous future for her. I filled her heart with wonderful anticipations. She seemed to be deeply touched, especially when I told her that she would have two sons who would serve in the Royal Navy. We helped her to climb to the rim of the outer crater. She was fatigued and overcome by emotion. Later, in the hut where a stove gave out a welcome warmth, we made her drink

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some milk, and to cheer her up I suggested a game of Jong Ken pon.

This childish game is one of the favourite amusements of the geishas, and consists of symbolizing stone by bending down the forefinger, scissors by two fingers divided, and paper by the hand outstretched. If you shake your fist at the same time that your partner stretches out his opened hand, he has won, because the paper wraps up the stone. But if he shows his two fingers separated he has lost because the scissors cannot cut the stone.

We started on our way down. Ochiyo San, now in good spirits, scampered with us like a little white rabbit, along the camellia-bordered path. I picked a red one and handed it to her.

"To bring you luck, Ochiyo San. . . . Let me be turned into a fried shrimp if this flower does not bring you happiness in less than a month's time. Take great care of it."

"And you will become," added Kimura, "the Lady of the Camellias of the Isle of Oshima."

She laughed, blushing in the sleeve of her kimono.

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“ Why do you blush, Miss Ten Thousand Years? ”

“ Because the women of Oshima are noted for their amorous temperament.”

And she blushed again. We joked with her all the way. We were happy because we had the feeling that we had saved a life and cheated the ferocious volcano of one of its victims. On board the boat back to Tokio we all three sat in the saloon where the gramophone played *Mon Paris*. In spite of herself Ochiyo San hummed the tune.

I made a sign to Kimura:

“ Our protégée is saved.”

“ Unless our student friend upsets our work by abandoning the Lady of the Camellias! For if she has a new disappointment in love I bet she will return and throw herself into the Mihara Yama.”

“ Unless she prefers the Kegon waterfall that you pointed out to me the other day at Lake Suzenji, where people destroy themselves by water instead of fire.”

“ Then what can we do? ”

“ Try and get this young Hideyo Takata's address, and point out to him his moral

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responsibility. Tell him that if he behaves badly to his little friend, Ochiyo, we will publicly accuse him of being morally responsible for her death."

When we got to Tokio, about nine o'clock in the evening, we offered our charming little friend many good wishes. She hailed a taxi and waved farewell to us through the window.

.

A week later I was about to go for a walk in the Ueno Park, when I was told that a young man and a young lady wanted to speak to me. Astonished, I went down into the hall and found Ochiyo San and a young man of about twenty years of age. She introduced me:

"Hideyo Takata San, my fiancé. . . ."

At that moment someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned and saw Kimura who, laughing behind his spectacles, exclaimed:

"Here is the crowning point of your work."

"Explain yourself."

"Well, the Fakir's predictions have come true. . . . There was nothing serious about the separation between these two young people. The student realized that he had acted unkindly

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to the woman he loves and I have brought them to-day to let you have proof of the happy dénouement of the affair."

Ochiyo San, blushing more deeply than ever, handed me a box wrapped in white paper, tied with red and white string.

"Te-Ko-ba-la San, my fiancé and I want to give you this little souvenir and to thank you for having predicted so truly the future and made clear to us our real feelings. It is a very modest present but I hope it will help you not to forget the kind action you did one morning in January, along with your Japanese friend, on the rough road to Mihara Yama."

I opened the parcel, curious to know what was in it, and I had a pleasant surprise in finding a little statuette which, by a strange coincidence, was very like Ochiyo San and had a kimono of the same colour as the one she wore on the nearly fatal day.

"Ochiyo San," I said to her, "nothing could appeal to me more than this delightful souvenir which is so like you. I will take it back to Paris and keep it in my study. Every time I look at it I shall call to mind a despairing

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little Japanese girl who, in the Isle of Oshima, was ascending her calvary to end her life. . . . Remember, Ochiyo San, never despair nor lose confidence in yourself. The nations of the world fight, because they don't understand one another, and lovers kill themselves for the self-same reason. . . . The future smiles on you now. The sun shines and life is beautiful. Someone has written on suicide considered as one of the fine arts. It ought rather to be considered: as an act of madness."

CHAPTER X

A CUP OF TEA WITH THE BONZESSES

Tokio

THERE is a little temple in a curious quarter of Tokio. A discreet little temple surrounded by wooden houses, dedicated to the goddess *Kwan Non*. Six Buddhist nuns officiate there. These ladies received us one afternoon.

In paying them a visit, I expected to go into an austere convent where nuns in serge robes would be frightened at the visit of three men. I was mistaken.

After having passed through a door upon which are large Chinese letters signifying "the light of benevolent pity," a nun with her head bare, and her head shaved, prostrated herself at the entrance and asked us to wear felt slippers before entering the house.

She took us into a little reception room where tea was ready. The Lady Superior appeared, amiable and smiling, like a woman

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of the world receiving her guests in her drawing-room. She also had her head shaved, wore a purple and white robe under a surplice edged with mauve and gold. Her name was Yakata Seikan. She dismissed the other nuns who were keeping their term in a convent in the neighbourhood of Nara.

She looked at us through her spectacles. Her eyes were clear and frank. Her little chubby hands toyed with a heavy chaplet. Kneeling on a cushion, she told us of the life of the bonzesses who, at the age of six or seven, are dedicated to the cult of Buddha. After twelve or fifteen years of hard study they pass their examination. About twenty-five years of age they undertake to be bonzesses for their whole life.

Their daily occupations do not seem to be devoid of pleasure. They rise at dawn and begin their prayers at five in the morning. After several hours' meditation they partake of a frugal repast and in the afternoon they are free. They go out, pay visits, go and see friends and return in the evening to the temple.

The Lady Superior asked us if we should like to be present at a little Buddhist ceremony, a

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sort of short mass, said in our honour. We hastened to follow her into the temple where a magnificent statue of the goddess, *Kwan Non* stood in the half light aureoled by wreathes of blue smoke which rose from burning joss sticks lighted at her feet.

We knelt before the altar, behind the Superior, who murmured sacred texts while the other bonzesses accompanied her litanies with the beating of a gong and the sound of the tinkling of little silver bells.

They repeated continually the sacramental phrase, the invocation to Buddha:

“Namu Amida Butsu. . . . Namu Amida Butsu. . . . Namu Amida Butsu. . . .”

Then, when the ceremony was over, the Superior invited us to purify our souls by crossing hell. Hell is a labyrinth of subterranean passages in a deep cellar, under the altar of the goddess; a labyrinth completely obscure, without even a dim light and through which one goes on tip toe.

We came to the surface and to the light of day, and received presents from the bonzesses who, as they prostrated themselves, wished us long life and happiness.

CHAPTER XI

MISS SUPREME-WISDOM GETS MARRIED

Tokio

“ I HAVE a very old friend,” said Madame Nakamura, “ a friend who belongs to our ancient aristocracy, the Countess T——. I will tell you about her. She knows that you are interested in our customs, and being a friend of Japan you do not talk nonsense about our country as soon as you are out of sight of our islands, as do so many visitors, alas, whom we have welcomed cordially. She does you the signal honour of asking you to be present at the selection of the trousseau of her daughter who is to be married in a month. Come with me. We shall be alone. You will learn some curious customs.”

I gladly accepted this kind invitation, and at three o'clock the next day we went to the Countess T——'s villa. It was decorated in Japanese style, with here and there discreet Western touches: a gramophone, a piano, a few

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pieces of European furniture, nothing more. I gathered that the T—— family, respectful of tradition, adopted only those of our diabolical Western inventions that they thought indispensable.

Bent double, my hands on my knees, I returned our gracious hostess's three salutations and, as is customary, I followed the ladies into a large room containing immaculate *tatamis* and artistically carved wood panels. Contrary to the usual custom, the room was covered with pieces of material of all kinds and a number of cushions. It was like a silk mercer's shop.

"Don't be astonished at all this display," said Madame Nakamura. "The Countess's tradespeople have sent a large choice of materials and clothes on approval for her daughter's trousseau."

"What is her name?"

"Chieko San . . . which means: Supreme-Wisdom."

"A good omen for her future husband."

The Countess, begging to be excused for a few minutes, my mentor, Madame Nakamura, took the opportunity of giving me several details regarding a Japanese marriage.

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“ You know,” she said, “ even to-day, in spite of the American influence, which affects some of our ultra-modern young people, a wedding with us is not a personal affair. It is an affair which concerns the whole family. Chieko, having reached marriageable age, has not suggested to her parents the name of the husband who would please her. It is they who have decided that Chieko must marry the son of Baron Y——, an old friend, a member, like Count T——, of the *Kazoku Kaikan*, the aristocratic club. In accordance with tradition, negotiations have been carried on by an intermediary, a mutual friend of the two families, Count K—— who will remain all his life a sort of godfather and adviser to the married couple. The two young people met for the first time at Count K——’s house six months ago. The engagement was concluded. Presents were exchanged. The date of the marriage was chosen by an astrologer, who fixed March 17th as the happy day. On that day, Chieko dressed in white, the colour of mourning, will go to her new house escorted by Count K—— and his wife. The mourning signifies that she will be dead to her own family



DEWAGATAKE—THE FAMOUS
WRESTLER



OZEKI—CHAMPION WRESTLER

MISS SUPREME-WISDOM GETS MARRIED

and only death can liberate her from her conjugal abode.”

Madame Nakamura was interrupted by the return of the Countess T—— and Chieko San, her daughter. More salutations! Again we bent our heads towards the *tatami*. Miss Supreme-Wisdom certainly deserves her name. Her oval face, a little too flat, was as unmoved as a white porcelain Kwanon. Her oblique eyes, chastely lowered, her extremely reserved and modest attitude bore witness of her good education and the care that had been taken to inculcate in her the duties of a perfect Japanese wife: complaisant, docile, ready to submit at all times to the will of her husband.

Subconsciously my mind wandered to engagement parties at which I have been present in New York. One, for instance, of a rich debutante, the daughter of a well-known New York financier on Wall Street. She was going to marry a young engineer whom she had vamped in a lift at the Ritz. Madame Mère had introduced me to the young demon with the Christian name of Barbara, who, with a slap on the back, had pushed me towards the buffet where she handed me a straw to drink

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an alcoholic concoction capable of resuscitating all the dead of Père-Lachaise.

Barbara . . . Chieko . . . ! Two young girls living not more than ten thousand kilometres apart, measuring land and water, but ten centuries apart measuring tradition.

.

The silk salesman appeared, prostrated himself and murmured words which meant that he was highly honoured that the Countess T—— deigned to send for a tradesman so contemptible as himself.

He displayed a black kimono. Round the bottom and at the edges of the sleeves it had a landscape in which golden maple trees turning autumn red, were predominant. We all admired this work of art. The Countess turned to her daughter, still unmoved, and asked her opinion. Then, and then only, did she timidly confess that it pleased her infinitely. On the other side of the Pacific Barbara had taken me in her touring car to Sachs, in Fifth Avenue, to show me the white dress she had herself chosen, deploring that she was not able to be married in pyjama

MISS SUPREME-WISDOM GETS MARRIED

trousers with a wisp of tulle tied round her bust!

Then, with great delicacy, the tradesman displayed the mourning kimono. The Countess T—— completed Madame Nakamura's explanations:

"My daughter will wear mourning on leaving the house. Then, when she reaches her husband's house she will put on a red kimono which is the colour of the newly born. In fact a new life will commence for her, a life of devotion to her husband. Won't it, Chieko?"

Chieko San agreed, giving a pleasant smile of acquiescence as the bright red kimono that her mother had chosen was displayed to her.

"This red will suit you very well, my dear child," said the Countess as she drew my attention to the symbols of the marriage woven in silk. They were, a pine tree, a bamboo and plum-blossom.

"They signify that Chieko must be faithful as a pine tree which does not change from one year's end to another. She must bow gracefully to the wishes of her husband as the stem

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of the bamboo bends to the wind. And just as the plum-blossom bursts forth from under the last snow of winter, so she must never forget the purity of her youth."

Madame Nakamura showed me the black kimono:

"Do you notice the family emblem, two glycine flowers crossed, woven five times in a circle on the back of the sleeves and two on the front folds of the garment?"

"Very pretty, indeed. . . ."

Then taking Madame Nakamura into my confidence I asked her quietly:

"But don't young Japanese girls have in their trousseaux, like young French girls, household linen, sheets, table-cloths, serviettes, personal lingerie, etc . . . ?"

Madame Nakamura looked at me with a smile.

"The underwear of a Japanese lady is the least luxurious part of her dress. . . . A short red flannelette skirt, a simple brassière, which would be the despair of Western young girls, if one may judge from the fashion papers and dress catalogues from Paris and New York that I glance over sometimes. . . . But do not

MISS SUPREME-WISDOM GETS MARRIED

mention that to the Countess T——, who would be upset at the thought that Mademoiselle Supreme-Wisdom should wear an open work combination of pale rose or buttercup crêpe-de-chine! I may mention for your guidance that when her daughter is married she will not go on a honeymoon with her husband as they do in the films and as certain very modern Japanese young couples do. . . . But I know the Countess has arranged a tea party for you at which Miss Chieko San will be present . . . so let us go to the room where it will be held.”

We went into a much smaller room and sat on low cushions. Miss Supreme-Wisdom reappeared carrying tea things of red lacquer and other articles necessary for the ritual.

Travellers who have visited Japan have attended with interest the *cha no yu*, the tea ceremony that all well-bred young girls have at their finger ends. It is a long, wearisome ceremony. Indulged in every day it would exasperate a “quick-fire” American. However, it has its old-world charm. As one watches the measured rhythm of Miss Supreme-Wisdom’s gestures, the position of

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the tea spoon, or the slow and studied movements so precious and so gracious one may not have grasped the educational value of this ceremony which, judged merely from its outward appearance may seem to be so puerile. Who can say that the daily practice of this tea ritual does not teach emotional young women, too ready to let themselves go, the art of control and self mastery which among the Japanese, is carried to its supreme limit!

When Miss Supreme-Wisdom at length offered me with the customary salutations the green beverage—for the tea of the ceremony is as fine as powdered jade—I took the cup with gravity and inhaled three times, as is usual, the warm infusion.

And as she prostrated herself before her mother and offered her another cup of tea, suddenly the young American debutante, the young girl who drank whisky like milk and spoke to her mother as if she were a taxi-driver, flashed back into my mind.

CHAPTER XII

THE NOBLE ART OF WRESTLING

Tokio

FUJITA came to me in the hall of the Imperial Hotel. The most palatial hotel in Tokio, which has only one story and is like a bathing establishment with its maze of narrow passages, its comfortable rooms with low ceilings and narrow loophole windows. This bizarre architecture is necessary in a country so often subject to earthquakes. The proof is that the Imperial Hotel came unscathed out of the catastrophe of 1923.

Fujita, with a fringe of grey hair on his forehead and his round spectacles, had just come from Central America after a trip round the world.

“ I bring you the atmosphere of Montparnasse and the air of Panama, in passing through the Panama Canal,” he exclaimed smiling. “ However, as a change from the *Dome* and the *Cupole*, I will take you to see my friends,

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the wrestlers who are training for the tournament to-morrow at the Palais des Sports. Come along . . . Madeleine is waiting for me in the car."

The amiable and charming French girl who bears the name of a well-known painter made room for me near her and we started for the wrestlers' training quarters, near one of the bridges over the Sumida in the Honjo-Ku quarter.

As he drove along he initiated me into one of the sports which most Japanese adore:

"Our wrestlers, contrary to what you may think, are giants who still observe the secular rites of their corporation. You have seen them in procession—there were more than six hundred—going to pay homage to the Emperor on the occasion of the birth of the Crown Prince. There are forty-eight ways of falling: twelve front clasps, twelve lifts, twelve twists and twelve clasps from behind. But you will understand better by seeing these men at work."

We went into the hall where the wrestlers were training under the eye of Mr. Kasugano, an old champion. A few privileged friends

THE NOBLE ART OF WRESTLING

were there sitting on mats in front of the sawdust arena in which thirty athletes were exercising in turn. They were clothed simply in a pair of bathing drawers, and wore, on the top of their heads, a chignon of stiff black oily hair.

One of them, Dewagatake Bunjiro, a native of Yamagata, brought forth startled exclamations when he entered the arena. Imagine a giant six foot four in height weighing 145 kilos with an enormous flat face, lips like sausages, a microcephalous head, little dark almond eyes and enormous rolls of fat one above the other round his waist.

He was frequently beaten by less heavy men who were more expert at twisting the muscles and went off hobbling, his thigh bruised by an opponent.

"He has gone to get a dressing of bear's grease," Fujita whispered to me, "for that is the best remedy. I recommend it to you if ever you get bruised in boxing with a bailiff!"

.

After having witnessed the rehearsal, we went the next day to see the show itself at the *Kokugi Kan*, the Palace of the National Games.

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Imagine a circular Vel'd'Hiver where 30,000 wrestling fans packed in the seats around the circumference of sand edged with a circle of rice straw upon a rectangular dais of golden cloth. The diameter of this enchanted circle is five yards. The idea is to throw one's adversary outside the marked zone. If any part of the body touches the ground outside the rice straw, that man is beaten: Japanese wrestling has no similarity to the Greco-Roman style where the shoulders touching the ground are a sign of defeat.

The presentation of the combatants had begun when we entered the immense building. We had taken off our shoes like everybody else, and bought at one of the numerous stalls an *hibashi*, a portable stove, to warm our box, and make our tea. Madeleine Fujita, already accustomed to Japanese tit-bits, had half a pound of octopus feelers, which, as everyone knows, have the pleasant taste of strips of india-rubber dipped in caviare mixture.

As we squatted in the box, the audience was still applauding the naked wrestlers, clothed in handsome overalls richly embroidered, which were worth two thousand yen (10,000 francs).

THE NOBLE ART OF WRESTLING

Our neighbours in the next box were four geishas who followed intently the preliminary ceremony.

The majority of these giants have, as a matter of fact, as their mistresses, adorable little geishas, dainty as porcelain dolls. So fragile are they, that one feels anxious for them that they are made love to by these rough giants with such enormous fat bodies.

Our neighbour only had eyes for one of the most massive wrestlers, the champion of the province of Kyoshu, who wore a forget-me-not blue overall edged with silver.

Madeleine Fujita remarked with a laugh:

“One might call him a child of Mary, blown out with a bicycle pump!”

But Fujita who was listening to the chatter of the geishas, whispered:

“Fortunately, they don’t understand you! For the pretty little thing in the apricot kimono, is the very one who has given him that overall of which she is so proud. . . . But, be quiet. . . . The wrestling is beginning!”

.

The referee, wearing pointed cap, puts the

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two adversaries in front of each other, and says to them in Japanese:

“ Look at one another well! ”

The combatants bend down, their legs apart, their hands on their thighs, almost touching each other. One thought they were going to rush at each other. But no! . . . They stand up straight again and leave the enchanted circle to dry their hands, gargle and stretch their muscles. Again they take up their positions opposite each other, and again have a good look. This time the wrestling is evidently about to begin. . . . No! It is a second false alarm. They were evidently not satisfied. Or perhaps their spring did not properly synchronise with the attack of the opponent. They stand up straight again and go and gargle once more. . . . Three, four, five times, we have to go through these successive deceptions, which put the nerves and patience of the spectators to a severe test. But the Japanese, lovers of wrestling, do not look upon things as we do, or perhaps they are not in such a hurry. Anyway they enjoy, without protest, this deceiving performance. I said deceiving, because after five or six false alarms,

THE NOBLE ART OF WRESTLING

which often last five or six minutes, the adversaries seize one another and in about ten seconds one of the two has been thrown outside the magic circle.

The referee acclaims the victor to the public by showing him his mirror, upon which the sun and moon are painted.

“The present referee,” said Fujita to me, “is one of the famous Kimura. They have been referees from father to son for 250 years.”

CHAPTER XIII

NOCTURNAL RECREATIONS

“ Do you like good Japanese cooking? ” Fujita asked me. . . . “ If you are tired of swallows’ nests, sharks’ fins, lacquered duck, milk of almonds and monkey’s brains that you have eaten in China, you will be very glad to try our food. I will take you to *Chi Kuyo tei* where you will have grilled eels (*unagi*) kneeling down. At Futamiya’s, you will have chicken *à la Fukuoka* for dinner. At the *Tokyo Kaikan* you will be regaled with *sukiyaki*, those slices of beef served with vegetables on a chafing dish which simmers in front of you, and are served by a young girl in a black kimono, with quick and nimble fingers.”

“ You make me impatient to handle the chopsticks.”

“ Then we will go and sample *tempura* at Barbu’s in Kiobashi Street. In this little restaurant fish has been served for generations.”

NOCTURNAL RECREATIONS

In the end we had a succulent meal of shrimps and other fish straight from the frying pan, served hot on squares of tissue paper under the distinguished direction of Mr. Higué no tempei, the famous Emperor of Fried Fish.

“Formerly, orthodox Buddhists did not eat meat,” said Fujita, as he dipped a crisp shrimp in his bowl of fermented soy. “But then came a day when fish was allowed. At last, the faithful, who wished to satisfy their love of good dishes and, at the same time, to respect the laws of their faith, had found a neat subterfuge to enable them, for example, to eat boar’s meat. They called it ‘the mountain whale’ (*Yama Kujira*).”

“In spite of the abundance of fish, shell-fish, mushrooms, seaweed and bamboo points which are the chief items in Japanese menus, it is prudent to realise that the food of this country does not suit European stomachs which are accustomed to bread, milk, grilled meats, salads, butter, sweets, jam, stewed fruits etc. . . . I am referring, naturally, to the real Japanese restaurants, and not to the European grill-rooms in Tokio and Yokohama,

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where one can have splendid entrecôtes and ask for *pan* (bread) as often as you like."

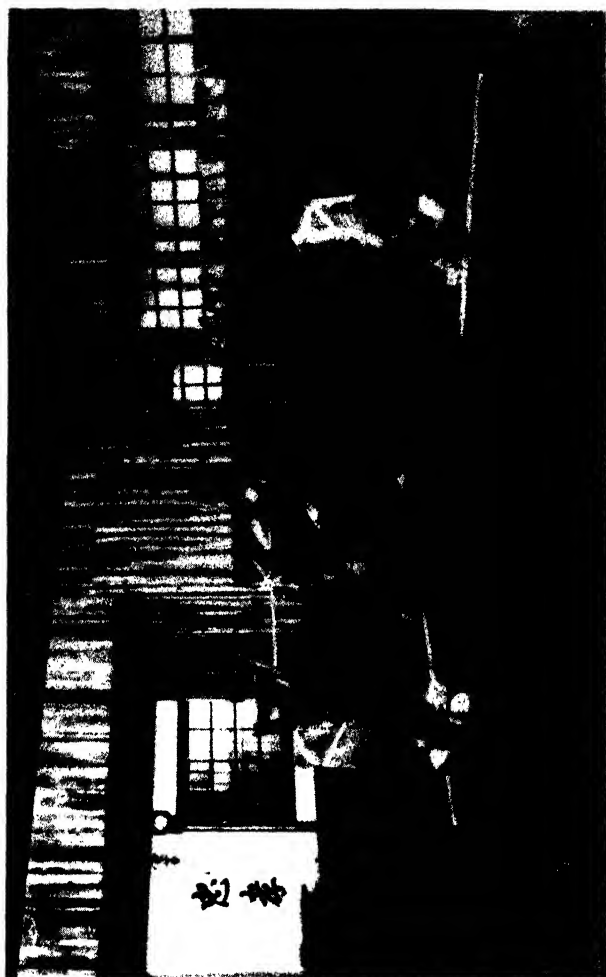
"You notice," said Fujita, as he said *pan*, "that this word comes from the French word *pain*. . . . We have borrowed several words from your language. For instance, we call a hat *chappo* ; a sabre *saberou* ; a button *botan* ; soap *chabon*. You will see labels on bottles ' *O de Kolon* ' and you will guess they do not contain Vermouth. And then again, you will hear in our aviation grounds our little yellow mechanics, who do not know whether France is in Africa or at the North Pole, pronounce quite well: ' *Couper contact* ' (break contact). One may safely guess that your flying officers have been there and have taught our pilots to loop the loop."

"What do you think of Thomas Raucat's book? "

"Very amusing. Somewhat exaggerated. My fellow-countrymen could not at first understand it; then, when they realised that the author was making fun of them, they thought the parody very bitter."

"You possess, however, a sense of humour."

"Yes, but in our own way. Did you ever



FENCING—JAPANESE FASHION—A POPULAR SPORT

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hear of the French Professor who, one day, went into a stationer's shop in Tokio to buy a fountain pen. They had only stylos to offer him. They showed him all sorts and all colours. In order to get rid of the importunate salesman, your jovial compatriot remarked: 'I would buy a stylo if it had an umbrella in it.' The salesman went away and came back with the manager who seriously apologised, saying: 'Sir, we have telephoned to our manufacturers. None of them make umbrella stylos.' Then the Frenchman burst out laughing and exclaimed: 'But I was only joking, sir!' And the Japanese stationer laughed as well—out of politeness—and replied very graciously: 'Ah! well, sir! . . . you should have told us so!''

.

We went for a cup of coffee into a neighbouring bar, and heard upon a gramophone a native melody, which had been all jazzed up. Thanks to the gramophone, the radio and the talking films, Western music has gradually won over Japanese ears.

As far back as 1910, an Italian professor, Salcoli, initiated them into the operas of Verdi

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and Donizetti. Since the war, future Japanese virtuosos have come to Paris to study. The charming and talented Chieko Hara, whom we heard at the Maison Franco-Japonnaise during a reception given by Monsieur and Madame Julliot de la Morandière, has won one of the first prizes at our Conservatoire.

One evening at the *Kaneda* (Field of Gold) Restaurant in the gay Azakuza quarter, I heard geishas humming *Mon Paris*, while on the floor above an old record was grinding out *C'est mon homme!* . . .

That evening a well-known Tokio novelist was pointed out to me. He was the author of a successful novel which, having been made into a film, was drawing crowds to one of the finest cinemas in Azakuza. The journalist who pointed him out said, in great admiration:

“ My friend sold the cinema rights of his work to the largest Japanese company and got a fabulous amount for it! ”

“ How much? ”

The journalist whispered:

“ A thousand yen. . . . It is enormous! ”

Five thousand francs! I immediately thought of M. E. Rice, the American dramatist

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who, in 1930, sold his adaptation for the screen of his Broadway success "Councillor at Law" for 150,000 dollars. Between this American and the Chinese author who, in Peking, told me that he disposed of the film rights of one of his books in exchange for a good dinner, the Japanese is a happy medium!

CHAPTER XIV

KABUKI

IN Tokio one dines early—about 6.30. In spite of that we were late getting to the Kabukiza Theatre, for the curtain rises at three o'clock in the afternoon! But as the performance consists of five or six pieces in one or two acts, one can attend a portion of the programme.

There are two kinds of permanent theatres, the *No* and the *Kabuki*. The *No*, almost a thousand years old, is a theatre reserved to the initiates, the highly cultured Japanese, who follow, with book in hand, the movements of the actors in superb masks, and listen with an effort to the archaic language whose hidden meaning is accessible only to a few privileged individuals.

The *Kabuki*, more popular, more realistic, puts on ordinary Japanese plays with simple ideas that the people understand. The *Kabuki* only goes back to the sixteenth century. This

KABUKI

class of performance is expensive in this country where everything is so cheap. An orchestra stall at the Kabukiza theatre costs eight yen, about forty francs.

When we entered the auditorium, filled even to the galleries, the curtain was going up on a classical play in two acts by Kavataki, called *Izayoi-Seishin*, the names of the two heroes.

As you will see, the drama is interesting. It concerns four people—a young Buddhist priest, a poet, a boatman and a courtesan.

The first scene represents the quay of the river Inase at dusk. Sheishin, the young priest belonging to the Gokurakuji temple is secretly amorous of a courtesan named Yzayoi whom he secretly visits in the brothel where she plies her deplorable calling. Having broken the rules of his religion, he has been judged and condemned by his peers who have expelled him from the temple. . . . Yzayoi has heard of the misfortune which has overtaken the young Buddhist. She leaves her brothel to come and join him by the side of the river.

She begs him to run away with her. But the wretched priest prefers to work out his

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salvation by toil. He tells her that he intends to go to Kyoto where he will learn a trade.

The courtesan weeps. She makes herself more attractive and ends by telling him that she is enceinte by him. Sheishin is astonished. He was bound to be! But what is still more surprising is, not that this girl attributes to him a doubtful paternity, but that he takes her seriously and immediately promises not to abandon his charmer. Unfortunately one must live. There will be three mouths to feed, and the wretched priest has no resources. In desperation, the lovers decide thereupon to throw themselves into the river. Like so many others in their country, they will commit *joshi*, or the double suicide for love.

Change of scene. The river with a boat, upon which the poet, Byakuren, sings as he mends his lines. As he pulls in his net he brings up a pretty woman who appears to be drowned. It is Yzayoi. The poet hastily brings her back to life. He takes her to his house.

Third scene. Same as the first. We see once more the wretched priest, Sheishin, who,

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wet to the skin, is wandering up and down the quay. He had certainly jumped into the dark water at the same time as his mistress. Unfortunately he had already learned to swim, and his instinct of self-preservation had impelled him to reach the bank in three overarm strokes! While he was thinking of another way of dying, a young man appears on the quay. Suddenly this young man faints, overcome by an attack of nerves. Sheishin assists and tends him. In rubbing the unknown man he notices that he has a large sum of money in his pocket. The temptation is great for the poor priest, who at once sees himself the owner of this money. The patient comes to and thanks Sheishin who thereupon asks him to lend him what he has on him. The man refuses because the money belongs to his family. He then wishes him good day. Sheishin follows him and suddenly leaps on his back. The young man puts up a fight. In the course of the struggle he falls into the river and is drowned. Sheishin, terrified, first thinks of throwing himself in also. But he avoids a second useless bath, realising that he knows too well how to swim. And then, after all it would be

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stupid to kill himself on account of this accident.

The last scene represents the house of the poet, who has saved Yzayoi's life. Some years later the courtesan had accidentally met Sheishin in the Hakone mountains. Very surprised to find one another alive, they decide to sell their child and to live without the law.

In fact, as the curtain goes up they are both arriving at the poet's house and want to extort from him a hundred *ryo* of money. They even threaten him if he will not give it them. But the poet is amused at their behaviour, and generously offers them the sum in gold pieces. Sheishin is stupefied. He stares at the pieces and realises that they come from the temple of Gokurakuji which, years ago, during his novitiate, was robbed. We learn then that the good poet, Byakuren, is in reality a famous and redoubtable burglar who lives on the proceeds of his thefts. This couple of reprobates are delighted to find out in the course of their mutual reminiscences that they are brothers!

This fraternity delights them because, with

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the help of the beautiful Yzayoi, they will be able to rob the rich quarter of Kyoto regularly. Unfortunately, their plans are frustrated by a servant who was none other than a detective in disguise. The house is surrounded by an armed force, and our three criminals are arrested. The curtain falls on this moral ending.

All Japanese figures are generally without shadows in their designs. The old Japanese theatre is also often without any half-tones.

“What has struck you most in the performance of these artists?” Fujita asked me.

“The apparent coldness of the two lovers. One notices in this country that the kiss and the caress are foreign to the mentality of its inhabitants. The more I see of you the more I realise what astonished, in former days, Lafcadio Hearn. In the old and popular ballad of *Shuntokumaru* quoted by him, is the story of two fiancés who, after long years of separation, meet in front of a temple. What do they do? They exhibit their violent emotion by touching one another’s hands. They were

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terribly overcome to have given way to such an audacious gesture! ”

“ This proves,” concludes the painter, “ that between a Marseillaise and a man of Nippon there is more difference than between a Martian and an inhabitant of the terrestrial globe.

CHAPTER XV

A STUDENT'S ROMANCE

“LET me take, haphazard from a bookshop, a dozen novels of the life of any country and I shall learn the psychology of its inhabitants as if I had lived among them twelve months,” said a naval officer, a friend of mine. . . .

He was very near the truth. It would be enough for a Frenchman who had never set foot in England to read a book by John Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett and P. G. Wodehouse, to have a fairly accurate idea of the character of our neighbours across the Channel. Scan the pages of Sinclair Lewis, O. Henry, Irving Cobb and H. L. Mancken, and you will be more or less conversant with the psychology of the American.

I tried this experiment by studying a résumé of the most successful book of a foremost Japanese novelist. This author, looked upon as a kind of Japanese Zola, had just published a novel called *Kobushi*—a slice of life, very

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instructive, which gives one an interesting epitome of the ways of the educated Japanese in 1935.

The hero of the story is a student, a handsome young man of twenty-five years called Masao Sinju. He has a sister and a half-brother, born of his father's first marriage. This half-brother hates Masao and Fuji because his father's second wife, has run away from him with another man. With a mother like that, thinks the half-brother, Masao and Fuji will certainly have inherited bad instincts. The young girl, Fuji, less censorious, is sorry for the child that her flighty mother has had with her lover and takes care of him. One day Masao, without a sou, upbraids his half-brother for having seized his father's heritage. The two half-brothers fight and part angrily.

Masao falls ill. Lying in hospital, he is visited by the wife of the rector of the University, a handsome Japanese who falls for the good looking student. She comes again to see him, brings him presents and gives him to understand that she will belong to him as soon as he is cured. Masao, flattered, hesitates

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and then consents to complete his convalescence at the rector's house at Chigasaki.

Taken care of like a prince, Masao recovers his health. Whilst he is at the villa he becomes acquainted with one of his kind nurse's friends, the Princess Momokoji, who is none other than the cousin of his fiancée, Junko. The student, yielding to the charms of the Princess, swears to her that she is his only love.

In truth, the Nippon Casanova now has three in tow. His fiancée, the rector's wife and the Princess fight for his favours. Prudently he suggests to the Princess that they should take a trip to Tokio and, as he is penniless, he accepts his ardent mistress's gifts of money. Unfortunately, the rector's wife, an unsatisfied Juno, becomes imprudent, and her husband, an energetic cuckold, puts an end to the comedy. He goes to Masao and expels him from the University. Masao, who is very ready with his fists—he has already knocked out his half-brother—flies into a rage and lands an uppercut on the chin of the noble old gentleman who drops a tooth into the ashes of his *hibashi*.

Masao's best friends, on hearing of the

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indefensible conduct of this cuckold who would not be generously disposed to their friend, take the part of the bellicose lover and also leave the University.

Meanwhile, the fiancée, Junko, a little simpleton in a rose kimono—interposes on behalf of her cousin, the Princess. Being unaware of their culpable relationship, she begs her to get her dear Masao reinstated in the University. The Princess agrees, but Masao has lost his love of work, flouts the idea of future diplomas and suggests to the Princess that he should travel with her—at her expense, mind you! The Princess, free as air, accepts the invitation with delight. The lovers take the train and the poor little cousin in the rose kimono ponders sadly in the long absence of this wandering fiancé.

She is wretched, fades away, and slowly dies while Fuji, absolutely disgusted with her brother, hears that he is living on the rich Takako. The most regrettable part of the whole affair regarding this Don Juan is that his three faithful friends, who nobly espoused his cause and left the University, are also disillusioned when they hear that he is being

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kept by a society lady. They have ruined their careers, in the hope that their friend Masao would achieve great things with them, and now he is merely playing the part of the pimp amid the delightful cherry blossoms of Kyoto!

It is too much! And, as we are in Japan, a situation of this kind allows of only one epilogue. One of the three friends gets a handsome sabre and takes it to Masao's house. On his return from his long absence he will find the following message:

" If you are a man, you will know how to put an end to your miserable life ! "

But we are not at the end of the drama. Masao thought that for enabling him to travel with her she ought to have something for her money. She has become enceinte. The Prince who is neither energetic nor noble will play the part of the prudent cuckold and will make away with the new born child which the good Fuji will take care of till further orders.

Masao drinks *saké* in order to forget these vexatious happenings. He drinks to excess. In his sober moments he ponders over his position and thinks that his half-brother was

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right. To be born of a bad parent is a handicap in life. He keeps repeating, between two glasses of *saké*:

“ The poisonous heritage from my mother! The poisonous heritage from my mother! . . . ”

One evening he makes up his mind. He shuts himself up with the love child and determines to put an end, once and for all, to the deplorable heritage by ripping up first his son and then killing himself. It is night. His hand trembles. He only succeeds in cutting the cheek of the poor little child. Then, with a steadier hand he proceeds to commit the traditional *hara kiri*.

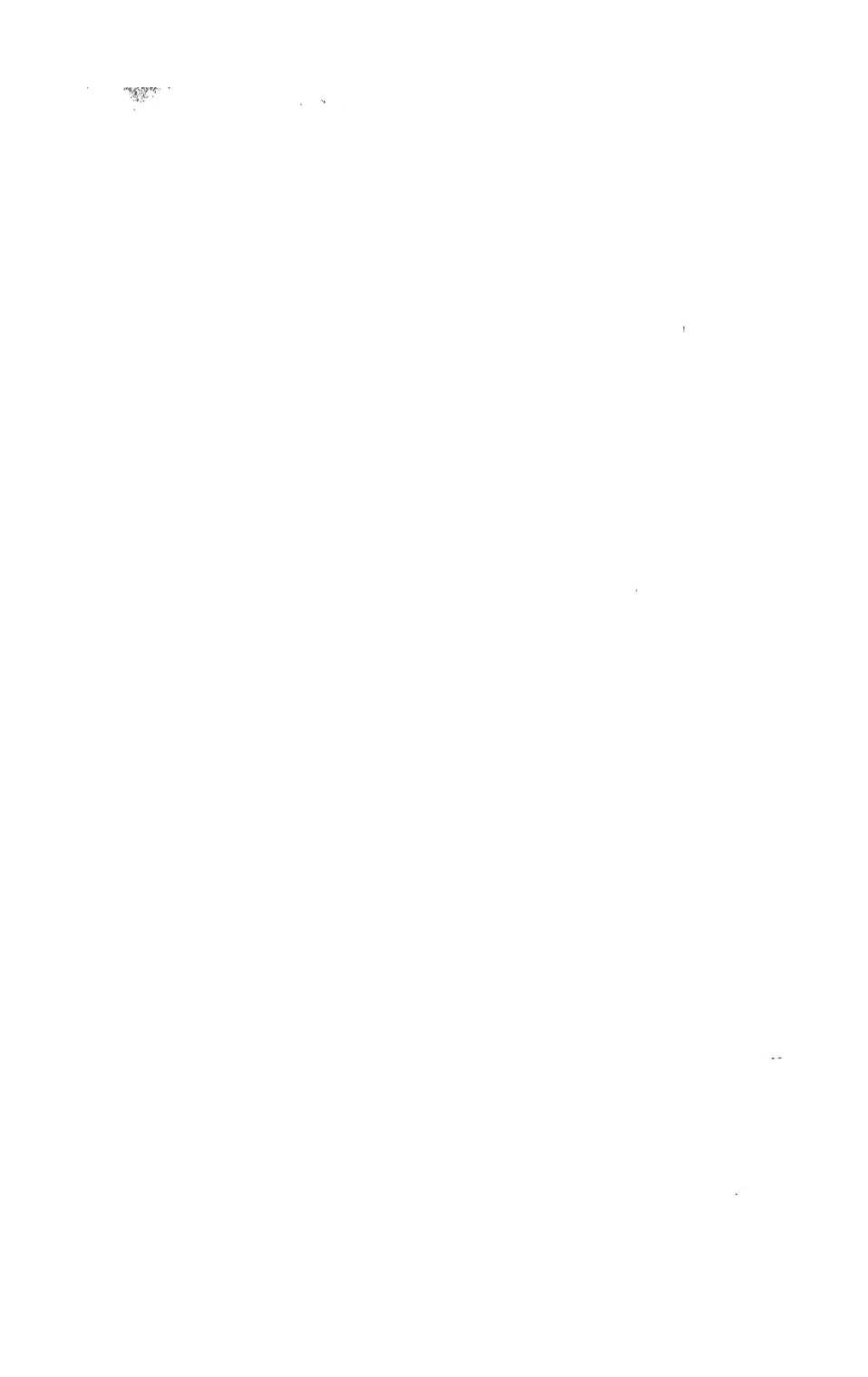
Mr. Kosugi's romance, which calls to mind at times Ibsen and Zola, is a curious picture of Japanese contemporary manners.



**THE TEMPLE OF HORYUJI AT NARA. THE OLDEST
BUDDHIST SANCTUARY IN JAPAN**



THE SACRED BRIDGE AT NIKKO



CHAPTER XVI

AMERICA THROUGH JAPANESE EYES

TALKING one day of Western affairs with a very well informed Japanese, I asked him his opinion regarding the key to the European balance of power.

He answered me without the slightest hesitation:

“The relationship between France and Germany.”

Paraphrasing this reply one may also add that the balance of power in the far East depends upon the relationship between the United States and Japan.

The Japanese proclaim with pride that they have very few illiterates. That is true, in spite of the fact that, as everyone knows, their language is difficult and the length of time it takes to learn it. It is so complicated that in recent examinations of conscripts 28 per cent only of the future defenders of the Empire

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knew how to write the character which represents the word—justice.

The words—*Dai Nippon Teikoku* which mean—the great Japanese Empire, and which corresponds almost to—the French Republic, were incorrectly written by forty-five conscripts out of 135.

These simple examples go to prove that if the number of illiterates is relatively small in Japan, it speaks in favour of the assiduity and courage of the scholars and students.

In a country, in which education is so developed, in which the English language is generally the means of acquiring knowledge of Western ways and customs, one is surprised at certain opinions held by Japanese concerning Americans and English. Even the Japanese who have lived for a long period in the United States and England and who, on returning to their country, give their impressions to their countrymen, describe the Yankees and the English in a very crude manner.

It appears that in their discussions the Japanese lay great stress upon the immorality of the two Anglo-Saxon nations.

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One of them, not long ago, expressed himself as follows:

“ In certain parts of the United States the population is composed entirely of brute beasts, —their thoughts are low and vulgar, and I do not hesitate to say deliberately to my fellow countrymen, that the Americans set a very bad example to all Asiatic races. . . . The Americans are as spiteful as serpents and vipers. And the American Government consists entirely of traitors.”

Another Japanese said bluntly:

“ America is the evil spirit threatening Japan. . . . A war with the United States is absolutely necessary. The Japan-American conflict has been decreed by heaven.”

Professor Murai, after a visit to North America, related his experiences in the *Eigo Seinen*, a paper which is read by professors and students. He says in his articles that all young students of both sexes in America are degenerates and debauchees. It is difficult to find among college girls one who does not carry in her bag articles necessary to avoid the

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results of her amours! The professor goes even further:

“ I have said that in America it is difficult to find a virgin. This is no exaggeration.”
(*sic*!)

Mr. Tsurumi gave a lecture one day to the University of Chicago. He spoke in the following terms:

“ What does Japan think of America? We know very well what you think of us, because we know your language. But very few Americans know Japanese well enough to understand what we say and what we write. That state of affairs leads to many misunderstandings.”

.

It was in 1924, when the United States passed its immigration law, which practically prohibited Japanese from entering California, that the countries became deadly enemies. All foreigners who were then living in Japan witnessed anti-American demonstrations which left no doubt in their minds as to the feelings of the Japanese towards their Eastern neighbours.

One could read, at that time among

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thousands of inflammatory articles, lines like these:

“ A law has just been passed in the United States which plainly stigmatises the Japanese as an inferior race, a law which is a slur upon the honour of every Japanese citizen and upon the nation. Our diplomats and our statesmen shake hands with the Americans and find that all is well. It is a lie! It is absolutely false! ”

It will be recalled that at this time the American flag was insulted in Tokio. Hatred and vengeance was displayed at the end of every banquet. In a moment the thousands of dollars sent by the Americans to help the unhappy victims of the terrible earthquake were forgotten.

In the streets of the leading cities one saw notices like this:

“ Never forget the date, July the 1st, the date the Americans insulted our country in an intolerable fashion. Every Japanese ought to bear in mind the following rules :

1st. So order your life that this date remains for ever impressed on your mind.

2nd. Hate everything American.

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- 3rd. *Do not live in too great ease.*
4th. *Never let your personal interests stand
in the way of your national honour.*
5th. *Never go into a church frequented by
American Missionaries."*

One must confess that the Americans' decision in 1924 acted as a whip to Japanese patriotism. The *Dai Nippon Teikoku*, the great Japanese Empire, became at that time the *Dai Nippon Teikoku Ban Banzai*, that is to say—the great Japanese Empire of far-flung territories, or as one says now Nippon before everything!

.

The Americans who are themselves Imperialists and who do not hesitate to use the big stick in case of need, accuse and reproach the Japanese of this self same Imperialism.

When one strips diplomatic discussions of their hypocrisy and the strict formality that obtains between well educated people sitting round a green baize table, when one is prepared to call a spade a spade, one cannot help laughing at seeing each nation accuse,

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according to its needs, its neighbours of Imperialism.

He is an Imperialist, in short, if he is more powerful than you, and knows it and shows it. Take the case of individuals. Max Baer, Carnera and Sharkey are imperialists because they have unbeatable fists.

But to return to Japanese Imperialism. What is a nation to do, whose population increases by a million inhabitants a year; which has ninety million souls and which, if birth control does not intervene, will increase to a hundred and twenty millions by 1964? Ought it to die of hunger, confined in islands that are too small for it? Ought it voluntarily to waste away and disappear by degrees?

The laws of nature force this nation to break out from its narrow confines and continue its existence. In Europe, at socialist meetings, *that* is called Imperialism. May be! Those who do not juggle with words and see things as they really are call it merely—the struggle for existence.

When a thousand rabbits are too cramped and have nothing to eat in a hutch, they break the boards of their house and escape into the

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fields in order to browse on the tempting lucerne grass. Call them imperialists if you like. But, in that case the lonely tramp who is hungry and haunts houses in search of food, is also an imperialist without knowing it. So it is with the Japs.

We are not taking up the defence of Japan, who, furthermore has not asked us to do so and laughs heartily at European opinions. We are convinced that this struggle for existence will be the cause, in the future, of a terrible war in the Far East. And we realize its inevitability, for on this earth the prolific and powerful tribe, animated by devouring patriotism and united by iron discipline, always triumphs over its neighbours, if perchance they allow themselves to be disintegrated by those three ailments to the body—social—individualism, scepticism and hedonism.

The most curious thing is that the Americans who complain of the turbulence and the feverish militarism of their neighbours are, in the first place, responsible for this state of things.

We have all heard the Montmartre cabaret singers joking our friends across the Atlantic,

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finding fault with Christopher Columbus for having discovered America. Our American friends might very well find fault with Commodore Matthew C. Perry for having, if not discovered, at any rate opened up Japan to the Western world.

Don't forget that for centuries Japan remained isolated and ignored by Europeans. Dutch sailors were the only people authorised to establish themselves temporarily on an island on the Pacific Coast, in order to trade with the inhabitants. The Japanese in fact had no wish to become acquainted with us, to associate with us or to be influenced by our culture and our civilization.

When Commodore Perry's squadron arrived off the coast he fired guns and rockets into the air, to let the Japanese know that they no longer had the right to isolate themselves and remain indifferent to the rest of the World.

What do the adversaries of Japan think of that? Had we, in the name of civilization that we claim (without any other proof) to be superior to all others, the right to go and interfere with Japan, to force her to agree to treaties that she did not want to sign, to wear,

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later on a soft felt hat, symbol of a culture of which we have no reason to be proud? Nice kind treatment indeed! Surely that alone would fully justify the recent abrupt departure of the Japanese from the League of Nations.

For, after the good (!) example of the United States, England, France, Holland and almost all the countries of Europe came and settled themselves in Japan in concessions taken by force, and claimed the most favoured-nation clause for their consulates etc., etc. The microbe of Imperialism began to attack Japan, as did the navies of the Western powers.

On this subject, a Japanese quoted to me, very appropriately, a statement by Professor Nitobé:

“ When Japan abandoned her splendid isolation and began to take notice of the rest of the world, she was astonished to find flying in the China Sea a number of flags that she had never seen before. The Tricolour, the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes of America. If, under the shadow of these banners, an army of poets and artists had invaded our shores we should have been moved by a spirit of emulation and we should have competed, in a

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friendly fashion, in the lists of literature and the arts. But when we discovered that under these flags, there were gleaming swords, we realised that we must arm in order to defend ourselves. Militarism was then the most prominent feature that was presented to us when we first came into contact with the West. The modern military and naval organisations of Japan are not our own inventions, they are merely copies of European models."

What can we say to this, we civilised races on this side of Suez Canal? We may retort that Japanese militarism, stimulated by Western interference, found a very well prepared ground in Japanese feudalism and the warlike proclivities of this vigorous race. That might perhaps make the germ of an excuse, but certainly not a justification.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FUTURE WAR

WAR is predicted for 1936—at least that is the prophecy of a Japanese officer, a novelist in his spare time. The book created such a sensation on the shores of the Pacific, that the Custom House officials at Hawaii confiscated most of the copies on board boats sailing to America.

A puerile precaution, for the literary effusions of Mr. Kyosuki Fukunaga have no power to bring about a war, even if the Japs and the Yankees really wanted to fight it out in 1936. The conflict would, furthermore, be stupid and terrible without any definite results, and as in 1918, victor and vanquished would both be the victims of their folly.

The book, by this retired captain of the Japanese Navy, is nevertheless interesting to read. For, the most curious thing about it is, that the author in his preface descants upon his intelligence and clairvoyance.

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“ This story begins with the torpedoing of an American man-of-war by the commander of a Japanese destroyer. I do not believe there exists a single officer in Japan who would think of committing such a stupid act!”

In that Mr. Kyosuki Fukunaga is right a thousand times.

But let us return to the prophecy. We are in 1936. A certain Japanese deserter, called Yawano, employed in a radio equipment shop, has been sent by his master, a shop-keeper in Dairen, to Manchukuo. He is repairing the set belonging to a Japanese. All of a sudden Yawano, his ear to the earphone, hears some very sensational news.

“ It is officially announced that the American warship, Houston, of the Far Eastern Squadron, has just been sunk by the Japanese destroyer, Nara. The causes of the accident are unknown. At the present moment the American and Japanese fleets have not moved, but all men have had their leave cancelled.”

You may imagine the excitement that this announcement caused in the Japanese colony

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at Dairen. Again, a few hours later, news comes that the Japanese destroyer, *Nara*, which had recently left Shanghai for Hankow had, when off the Chinese fort, Woosung, fired two torpedoes into the hull of the flagship of the American squadron. The officer responsible for this serious action is the lieutenant in command of the *Eitaro Maki*. The American ship, the *Houston* has run aground and is half submerged off Whangpoo. Among those lost are Admiral Knox of the American Navy and 400 men. The officer in command of the *Maki* is put under strict arrest, and is a prisoner in the Third Squadron. He is the son of General Maki, a member of the Supreme Japanese War Council.

The novelist describes the serious consequences of this unforeseen action. In Japan the population is literally stupefied. In America the fury of the people knows no bounds. Washington demands two million dollars indemnity and the death of Lieutenant Maki. The Japanese Government, after some hesitation, tenders its apologies. The offending officer is brought before the War Council and states, in his depositions, that he was exasper-

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ated by the position brought about by the Naval Agreement which had been signed between Japan and the United States. So, thinking that it was better to fight the Americans before they had time to increase their naval strength, he decided to force on a war by an irregular action rather than submit to the imperialism of their Eastern neighbours. At the end of this speech, full of patriotic fervour, the lieutenant begged them to sentence him to death.

The Court granted his request. He is to be shot by twelve sailors. Mr. Kyosuki Fukunaga gave precise instructions for the execution. Maki, smiling, buoyed up by his patriotism, refuses to have his eyes bandaged. Three rounds are fired, but Maki is still standing upright. He has not been hit. Just as the order for the fourth round is being given, the officer commanding the garrison intervenes. Japanese law forbids more than three rounds to be fired at a man condemned to death. Consequently Maki's life is saved. The explanation of the mysterious affair is quite simple. Maki's popularity in the fleet was so great that no sailor in the firing squad

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would shoot him. Each one of them deliberately fired above his head, leaving to his other eleven comrades the revolting task of executing the sentence. On hearing that Maki is still alive, the Americans are enraged. They call public meetings of protest, and lynch Japanese in the most important Californian towns.

War is at length declared. Japan is not sure whether she will begin by attacking Hawaii or the Philippines. At the opening of hostilities we find Yawano, the deserter from Dairen, itching to fight. Lieutenant Maki, who had been dismissed from service, is re-instated. He is given the command of a new destroyer, the *Kurumi*, and, by a strange coincidence, Yawano is in charge of torpedoes on board. The author then describes a situation which hardly savours of fiction, but which, in the event of real war between two countries, would be very likely to occur. It happens that some ships of the American Atlantic Fleet are ordered to go through the Panama Canal into the Pacific. The commanders of the ships were warned of the dangers they ran in the neighbourhood of the Canal. The



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officer in command of the *Oklahoma* hears of the desertion of a negro employed in the Admiral's mess. Little importance is attached to it, but as a matter of fact it is mentioned that the negro had intercepted the following order:

“The cruiser *Oklahoma* will proceed through the lock at Gatun at 10.30.”

The cruiser, in point of fact, enters the Canal at the precise hour stated. Suddenly there is a loud explosion which shatters both the ship and the gates of the lock. On board other United States ships it is believed that negro sailors have been responsible for the bombs, and the Minister of the Navy is compelled to dismiss all men of colour from the Fleet.

The author's narrative then proceeds to describe the struggle between the two hostile fleets. An American submarine bombards the Japanese port of Manozuri. The bombardment wrecks a train and amongst the victims is numbered General Maki, the father of the man who started this titanic combat.

Japan seizes the Philippines. Then the American Grand Fleet, being concentrated in the Pacific, moves in battle array against the Japanese Fleet under Admiral Nagano. The

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Americans have 126 fighting planes on their aeroplane carriers *Saratoga*, *Lexington*, *Ranger*, *Antacoma*. The Japanese have only 105. The Naval battle is fully described by Mr. Kyosuki Fukunaga, and one must admit that he attributes to the American aviators a very warlike spirit and supreme courage. Unfortunately, they are overpowered by numbers, the Japanese having been reinforced the day of the main attack by forty-five more planes. The Americans are beaten at sea. The losses are very heavy on both sides. Note, by the way, that according to the author, Admiral Nagano makes sure of victory by clearing the sky of all enemy planes. The Americans no longer having any air observers, are handicapped in their gunfire, which loses much of its accuracy, while the Japanese, hidden behind smoke screens, with their destroyers acting as scouts, and kept in touch by their aeroplanes, are able to sink the enemy ships without difficulty.

When the American Fleet has been partially destroyed, Admiral Nagano sends a wireless message to the enemy asking them to surrender. A quarter of an hour later the white flag is

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hoisted at the masthead of the 117 American ships which are still afloat. These ships are taken into captivity into the Bay of Tokio. As to Lieutenant Maki, he is killed in the fight, his ship having been sunk. Among the few survivors of the *Kurumi* is the old deserter, Yawano, saved but wounded. He is sent to hospital at Beppu. This hero and deserter, this brave Japanese, completes his convalescence in prison. Returning to civil life, he marries a charming Japanese called Chiyeko, which means Miss Supremely Wise.

The author ends his novel with these lines, very wounding to American pride:

“A year later, Yawano, his wife and his child go on board the Chichibu Maru to pay a visit to Hawaii, which has now become a Japanese colony. In the hold of the boat there is a bronze statue of Lieutenant Maki. It is being taken to be erected with great pomp and ceremony in the Park of Waikiki, to celebrate the triumph of Japan over the United States.”

In France we had the prognostications of Captain Danrit. The Germans were regaled

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in the same way before 1914 with *From Jena to Sedan* by Franz Adam Beyerlein. Let us hope for the peace of the world, that the work of Mr. Kyosuki Fukunaga is only a literary *hors d'œuvre* of a conflict that will never take place.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN THE POT BOILS OVER

THE pot, in the Far East, whose water is boiling and already forcing open the safety valves, is Japan. The compressed steam is the growing birth-rate, and the safety valves are birth control, the limitation of the family and the industrialisation of the country.

Statistics give one to think seriously. In 1933, 2,182,743 births were registered in Japan against 1,174,875 deaths. The population therefore is increasing by 1,007,868 souls annually. Consequently one can estimate the gravity of the question by reflecting that if 66 million Japanese had difficulty in existing on the resources of the country in 1934, what will happen in ten years when there will be ten millions more?

I put this question to one of their economists and he replied:

“ How does a country rid itself of its superfluous population? It can ordain that one

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out of every two newly born children must be drowned in a bucket of water like a useless cat. That method is good for domestic animals but not, as yet, recognized amongst humans. Two means are tolerated according to custom—war and emigration. But, in order to emigrate one must have territory available. One does not emigrate to the moon. Well, our neighbours—is it an insult because they misunderstand us, or is it a compliment because they fear us—shut us out everywhere: from the United States, Canada and Australia.”

“ You are emigrating now to Manchukuo.”

“ Yes. Unfortunately it is not a good country for emigration. We are sending picked men there: mechanics, industrialists and colonists. Japanese peasants who have gone there have asked to be sent back. They are beaten by the Chinese peasants who, in this cruel climate, are even more frugal than we, and who need so little. It is unbelievable! ”

“ You have Brazil.”

“ A limited outlet. . . . Hardly twelve thousand emigrants a year. You see, the most terrible thing for a country like ours, an agricultural country, is the extreme density

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of its population. Belgium has four hundred inhabitants to every square kilometer of cultivated land. One quotes it in Europe as a unique example of dense population. Well, we have the record number of 959 per square kilometer."

"One wonders how it is you have not died of hunger in your islands."

"We should have done so if we had been meat-eaters! Happily necessity has imposed upon the Japanese a taste for rice and fish, two forms of food which cost less than meat. It is more burdensome to rear an ox than to bring home a ton of fish in a boat from the sea. We are not examples of the theory of the survival of the fittest but of the most frugal and least exacting people—as are the Chinese. You have no doubt noticed that in the winter we only warm ourselves very sparingly and freeze stoically in our little wooden houses to save the cost of heating. The clothes of the ordinary Japanese cost very little. That of the working classes is worth the price of a Frenchman's necktie. Are you surprised that our workmen in our factories are content with three francs a day, to do work which would be paid thirty francs in your country!"

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“ And they work fifty-five hours a week when the maximum with us is forty-eight hours.”

“ A Washington Convention has been signed. We have permission to sell twenty-two centimes electric lamps, and to offer to Jura watchmakers’ customers watches at thirty-six francs a kilo! You were talking just now of safety valves. I see three—birth control, war, and intensive industrialisation. The first does not give, in our case, results that the followers of Margaret Sanger, the American who, in 1922, landed here and told our people to: ‘ Produce fewer children! ’

“ The propaganda pamphlets of this estimable lady, who wished to teach married couples prudence, were seized by the Government. Our responsible Ministers no doubt thought if the *Sex Stores* increased in number with their varied stock of instruments for the prevention of reproduction of the human race, the last Japanese would die solitary and alone on the rock of Shikoku.

“ The second safety valve is war. It is bloodthirsty but traditional and accepted by custom as a means of diminishing in a short

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time the superfluous population. I mentioned, just now, the drowning of kittens in a bucket of water made applicable to newly-born babies. The good folk who hear of that shudder with horror and accuse me of barbarity. Personally, I think that it would be less cruel to drown, as soon as they are born, without pain, babies who had hardly begun to breath than to mutilate, hack to death, asphyxiate, burn and torture one or two million young men in the flower of their youth and at the height of their sensitiveness. But it appears that, in giving voice to such a theory, I am shocking delicate minds and committing an offence against practical morals. If that be so! Increase and multiply without any control. . . . Down with all preventives and books which teach birth control until the day when the swarm breaks its bonds and the cyclone of fire and blood spreads its horrible ravages on an Asia running amok."

"You are pessimistic."

"Wait. I have not spoken to you of the third safety valve."

"What is that? Intensive industrialisation!"

"Yes. The question lies in deciding

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whether the industrialisation of Japan will enable the surplus population to be fed and maintained. Well, I reply to you in all sincerity that it will enable it to do so if nothing changes the economic conditions of the world, in other words the customs imposed at various frontiers.”

“ In that case we should be involved in a vicious circle. In order that Japan prospers and lives in peace, it is necessary that Europe and America accept tamely your economic invasion. But if that happens it will be the ruin of numerous industries in the Western world, leading to catastrophic unemployment and its attendant rioting which will be the prologue of war.”

“ Let me go further. There is no doubt that Japan is the leading industrial and commercial nation in Asia. China and India are our clients not our rivals. . . . We have many advantages—the cheapest labour market in the world. Ultra-modern industrial machinery. Coal in abundance, etc. . . . Our neighbours, even the poorest on the Asiatic continent, are ready to buy our products which are unbeatable as regards price. Who can sell to

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coolies, as we can, shirts at four francs each, india-rubber shoes at two francs the pair? As I have told you, then, the equilibrium can be maintained between our needs and our expansion. Unfortunately the economic horizon is clouded. South Africa, Melanesia, Egypt, India—with whom we have just signed an agreement which does not satisfy our workers—are shutting their doors to us. Our imports are beginning to be a kind of Banquo's ghost at the door of Europe. . . . So the conclusion is very simple—if Europe and America unite in shutting down the safety valve, if the steam cannot escape freely, the pot will burst, and then so much the worse for those who are not able, or do not know, how to keep out of the way of the explosion.”

CHAPTER XIX

BANZAI! . . .

I DON'T think there exists a country about which there are so many different opinions as Japan. I have met, in the Far East, people who, having lived there, described it according to their views and their temperaments as either a hell or a paradise.

"The Japanese are unbearable, deceitful, cruel, cheats and megalomaniacs," says one man. "I wouldn't, for anything in the world, live again with them."

"Japan is a charming country," says another. "I spent ten of the happiest years of my life there, and I long to go back."

The only thing we can conclude from these two opposite opinions is that Japan is not a banal, insipid, expressionless country. Let us put aside the feminine charm of the women which is incontestable. All foreigners, or almost all, agree in praising the attraction, the infinite charm and the unrivalled elegance of

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the Japanese woman. And let us not mention, for the moment, the incomparable beauty of certain views, nor the poetical fantasies that these landscapes inspire.

Let us consider merely the relationship of man to man. The chief cause of misunderstanding arises undoubtedly from the divergences of mentality. Especially between the cultured people. Their laws of logic, I mean their intellectual and sentimental logic, seem to be quite different from ours. We may know a Japanese very well, but we never understand his mind, that labyrinth where our definite standards are useless and lose their values.

How could it be otherwise with a race so radically different from us? We base our social system on the marriage of two individuals who choose each other and love one another more than their parents or their ancestors. While all Japanese social life is based upon the sacrifice of the person to the family as a whole.

To illustrate, by a simile, this glaring difference, one can represent the Western social system by a huge flat city built on a series of wobbly piles, while Japanese society is like a compact and raised city, built of solid sky-

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scrapers representing one indestructible family. In other words, just as an economist classifies industries, so the moralist would distinguish between the horizontal Western family as opposed to the vertical family of the Japanese.

One little detail will illustrate this difference. Where do we place the guest whom we wish to honour? On the right hand, as if we alone were qualified to honour our guest. Where does a Japanese put him? As near as possible to the *tokonomi*, the little altar or alcove consecrated to the family ancestors.

How can we be understood when every one of our actions shocks a Japanese who, out of politeness, appears not to notice it? We Westerners, proclaim our love for our wife, our affection for our children. A well educated Japanese, respecting secular civility, will never speak of his feelings, his wife or his children.

The daily discussion of our intimate personal affairs is to him vulgar and ineffably unspeakable. The brutal, though well-meaning way we pay compliments to ladies and young girls, seems to him the last word in coarseness. I shall never forget that on January 15th, 1934, at six o'clock in the evening, at Tokio, I had

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the temerity to congratulate a lady on the good taste she had shown in choosing her kimono, a delightful combination as regards its colour and its embroidery. The unfortunate lady went scarlet and was as upset as if I had made a coarse barrack-room joke in her presence!

How can we understand a people whose nouns have neither gender nor number; whose verbs have no persons; whose adjectives have no comparisons. A people absolutely incapable, with very few exceptions, of finding any sense in our metaphors or our other figures of speech.

But, one may retort, is it essential to understand persons in order to love them, or at any rate, to appreciate, to assess or enjoy their peculiar charm? Have not mysterious women a special attraction for many men? Then, would it not be wise to love Japan as one of those beautiful creatures inaccessible and distant, difficult to approach and always incomprehensible; regarding whom one is not sure whether her enigmatic smile hides a menace or a caress? That, at any rate, was my last impression when, on the deck of the *d'Artagnan*

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— regretfully bade farewell to Japan. No, not farewell, but au revoir! For behind Fuji Yama—which stood silhouetted in its dazzling whiteness of eternal snow, against the rose-pink dusk, Japan smiled once more, and ever impenetrable and attractive, seemed to call me back.

END.

